

A SQUARE IN THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

An Alaskan Hunt

by

WILLIAM DAYTON HOLMES

A high-spirited and thrilling adventure tale of dangerous big game hunting is what readers might well expect of international White Hunter William Dayton Holmes, but in "A Square in the Arctic Circle" he has given much more.

Intrepid sportsman-author Holmes, far from his usual setting — the jungles of Africa — offers not only the story of his hair raising and often side splitting first trip to Alaska, but in an extensive introduction provides a complete and authoritative guide for the visitor to Alaska.

From the minute Holmes and his lawyer-travelling companion, Arthur Crowley, take off for Alaska after an all too lively going away party — waking next day to a suddenly sobering first look at the Polar Ice Cap where their adventures will take place — the reader is aware that an exciting and unique escapade lies ahead.

Living on the frigid Ice Cap itself with a warm and wonderful Eskimo family, the hunters learn quickly that the life of an Arctic trophy-seeker is a rough one. The harrowing experi-

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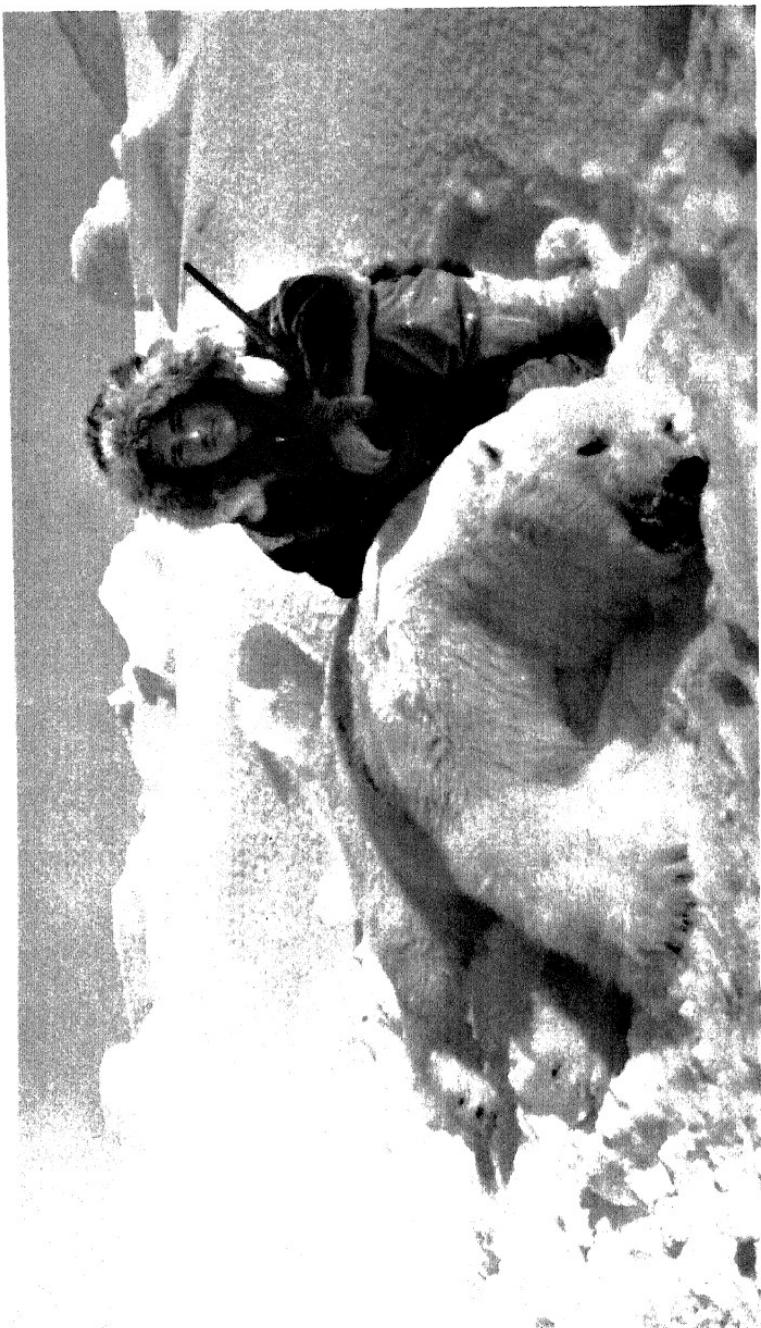
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Nanook, king of the Arctic Ice Pack. The author Kneels beside his world record class polar bear.

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by

WILLIAM DAYTON HOLMES

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DEDICATION

This book has many dedications. Because smiles are more acceptable than scowls and because a determined publisher trapped me over an exotic rum drink at a time and place I wish I could remember, I dedicate this book

To the People and Government of Alaska, our 49th State,

To the publisher, last of the big-time gamblers,

To the polar bear, king of the Arctic Ice Pack and the reason this book was written in the first place.

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INTRODUCTION

"You are out of your big fat skull, Henry, if you think we are spending our vacation in a deep freeze."

I turned around, more than mildly interested. My first name is William, not Henry, and a lively discussion between a typical middle-aged couple was shaking the walls of the travel bureau.

"Did you hear me, Henry?" demanded this overbearing Amazon. "Alaska is absolutely out of the question!"

I looked at Henry and felt pangs of sympathy. All 120 pounds of him was crouched in the corner. Henry reminded me of a cocker spaniel puppy when first introduced to a rolled-up newspaper. Henry was going to vacation any place his frau damn well wanted. Everyone knew it, particularly the travel agent. Now the agent was showering his travel folders and attentions on Henry's first lady — no doubt his only one.

I am not an eavesdropper by nature but this conversation fascinated me. Here were two more people uninformed about the wonderful travel opportunities offered by our forty-ninth state. Yet I could not be too smug about their ignorance of Alaska, because I wore an identical dunce cap a few years ago.

A prime pleasure of mine is to travel, whenever time and bank book permit. Most of these trips are motivated by my desire to hunt and fish. Wherever I have gone in the past, be it the jungles of the Amazon, the forests of Europe, mountain streams in the Andes or the plains of Africa, I have

found a greater understanding of fellow man and myself.

The last place I ventured to was Alaska. I would have joined Henry in the corner if I had not fulfilled my desire to hunt Alaska's three outstanding trophies: the polar bear, the ugrug, the practically extinct giant bearded seal, and the giant Kodiak bear, the largest of all bear and the one possessing the most treacherous disposition.

After I proposed my vacation hunting plans to friends, they looked at me as if I were net material. Some even went so far as to inquire if I had been suffering from persistent headaches. No one understood why I acquiesced to this "Call of the North." Of course, no one knew the first thing about Alaska except that the country was an uncivilized wilderness with sub zero temperatures 365 days a year and that trappers, miners, eskimos, and escaped convicts accounted for the populace.

I realized these facts too and only a courageous man with a dedicated pioneer spirit would consider such a trip. I could hardly stand being such a hero as I swaggered into a Los Angeles travel bureau!

When I announced my death-defying plans to the travel councillor, I stood back and waited for some type of decoration to be pinned on me immediately. No such medal was forthcoming. In fact, the only reaction expressed was a polite phrase: "I am sure you will enjoy your trip, Mr. Holmes. So many of our customers return to Alaska year after year."

"You mean adventurers like myself?" I asked in my adventurer's voice.

"I mean nice Mrs. Magee, aged 83. Also Mr. Forbes, ten years Mrs. Magee's senior. The Donner family — they took their five children along. The Kenneth Langs recently returned from their honeymoon. Then I booked the princi-

pal of Roosevelt High and his twenty students only last month. Now let me see who else — the Stanton family, the Gregs, the Levys, the Agnews . . . ”

“You don’t have to continue,” I growled. I buried my nose in the travel folders and retreated to the corner couch. Those next few hours I received a liberal education both from the folders and from a very well-informed travel councillor. But nothing I read or heard that day compared with the series of agreeable surprises I was to experience first hand in Alaska shortly thereafter.

Alaska suffers from ignorance, not her own but the ignorance of people who believe implicitly the wild north adventure yarns they view on their television sets and at their local theaters.

The person inquiring about a vacation to Hawaii does not believe that the beaches are lined with head hunters or that island maidens are sacrificed to volcano gods at the airport. Then why should Alaska be considered so wildly primitive?

For lack of more suitable transportation, let us use words as a vehicle for a brief northern tour. Then you can be the judge of what Alaska has to offer her visitors.

HOW DO YOU GET THERE?

Automobile

There are many means of transportation to Alaska. If time is not a factor, by all means take your car and set out on the most adventurous highways and roads on the North American continent.

The Alaskan Highway begins at Dawson Creek, B.C.

and guides you through unbelievable scenic beauty until your motor trip culminates at Fairbanks, Alaska. You drive 1221 miles through Canada and 306 miles in Alaska itself. Your safety is assured by vigilant maintenance crews and the internationally respected Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Lodgings and gas stations are conveniently located and are well posted.

Once the motor tourist crosses the Alaskan state boundary, he will find other modern highways to speed him to points of interest. Notable routes include the Haines Highway, the Taylor Highway, the Richardson Highway, the Steese Highway, the Elliott Highway, the Seward Highway, and the Denali Highway. I mention these to impress upon the reader that Alaska is not traveled on a series of cow trails.

Your best authority on Alaskan motor car travel is definitely not me but your nearest chapter of the Automobile Association of America; let them guide your trip. I got lost five times.

Bus

Many tourists prefer to leave the car in the garage and let the bus driver do the work. Get in touch with Western Greyhound Lines, Seattle, Washington, or Greyhound Highway Tours in San Francisco, California, or National Trailways Bus System which also offers excellent service, if bus is your choice of transportation.

Train

If you are a train lover, prepare yourself for a disappointment. There is no railroad route to Alaska from the

United States and forget about the one in Canada. The Canadian train trip starts at Whitehorse and 110 miles later deposits you in Skagway. Be practical. If you get as far as Whitehorse, who's going to feed your dog sled team while you are away?

Boat

Why not then travel to Alaska by boat? Certainly no other leisurely means of transportation offers a more relaxing atmosphere. Cruises have universal appeal, for they allow the tourist time to enjoy the companionship of fellow passengers. Cruise directors and their staff are happy to answer questions about visual points of interest. Passengers are indoctrinated on best buys, where to go, places to eat, etc. before they arrive at ports of call. Children are not confined to back seats or aisles when playing cops and robbers, as they have to be on a plane.

Have you ever lost your patience on a plane when a three-headed little monster picked you out as the robber? I was almost put off a flight when a charming six-year-old introduced me to the game. He woke me up with an agonizing pinch on the left leg.

"I'm a cop and you're pinched," the curly haired creature shrieked delightedly above my scream.

I looked around cautiously and could not locate the child's parents. Then, I gave the kid a whack on the left ankle, which promptly brought him down moaning in the aisle and ended the game.

"That's no way for an adult to act," shouted the enraged man seated next to me. "Stewardess, send for the captain."

How could I know mother and sonny were not sitting with father? No problems like this on shipboard!

Should you decide on an Alaskan cruise, you will start from Vancouver, B.C., which both American and Canadian ships use as their port of embarkation.

Canadian Pacific has a shuttle steamer service emanating from Seattle, which transports passengers across Puget Sound and lands them at Vancouver seven hours later. Some cruise passengers prefer to board United Air Lines or Trans-Canada Airlines at Seattle for a speedy flight to Vancouver.

Alaska Cruise Lines Ltd. offer eight and ten-day cruises. Their modern ships, *S.S. Glacier Queen* and *S.S. Yukon Star*, glide up the thousand-mile ocean lane referred to as the Inside Passage. Leave the seasick pills at home because this water passageway has a lake calmness. Shipboard life has an informal air of friendliness and recreational events assure a fun voyage. However, one should not trip up the gangway expecting these ships to be a luxury threat to the Cunard or the United States Lines. Depending on the cruise booked, ports of call include Ketchikan, Juneau, Skagway, Glacier Bay, Sitka and Prince Rupert.

Canadian National Steamship Lines offer a nine-day tour between Vancouver and Skagway. Ports of call are more limited for the tourist, as the *S.S. Prince George* visits Wrangell, Ketchikan, Prince Rupert and Ocean Falls. However, passengers report this is compensated by the cruise's luxury.

Canadian Pacific offers a similar seven-and-one-half day cruise aboard another cruise ship, the *S.S. Princess Louise*.

Airplane

I do realize that the average vacationer today is fighting a battle of time. The many fine plane transportation systems available solve his problem. Again, Seattle usually serves as your point of departure.

Pan American World Airways has flights to Ketchikan, Juneau, Whitehorse and Fairbanks. Pacific Northern Airlines services Ketchikan, Juneau, Cordova, Anchorage and Kodiak. Canadian Pacific Airlines schedules flights to Whitehorse and Fairbanks. Alaska Airlines flies to Fairbanks and to Anchorage via Fairbanks. Northwest Orient Airlines goes to Anchorage and has a flight to Edmonton and to Anchorage via Edmonton that departs from Minneapolis-St. Paul.

The choice of what airline to fly is generally determined by the tourist's travel itinerary. Where airlines are in direct area competition, Alaska's visitors can be assured of a safe and enjoyable flight whatever their air carrier choice may be. There is little difference in price and a consistent policy of all these airlines is individualized luxurious cabin service.

I have purposely left out transportation costs. It is confusing because of summer rates, thrift rates, travel specials, various flight passenger classes, taxes and so forth. I suggest that this can best be explained by your travel agent. How's that for passing the buck?

The American Express Company is most proficient in arranging any travel plans and has a highly specialized department to plan tours anywhere in the world. Its Alaskan tour is an excellent example of the type of service it offers to customers.

Other travel organizations offering an exciting variety

of escorted Alaskan tours are: Arctic Alaska Tours, Seattle, Washington; Scenery Unlimited Tours, Berkeley, California; Thomas Cook & Son, New York; Brownell Tours, Birmingham, Alabama; Happiness Tours, Chicago, Illinois; Greyhound Highway Tours, San Francisco, California.

WHAT DO YOU FIND?

Now that you know *how* to travel to Alaska, what do you see and do upon arrival? Alaska is such a vast state that it is confusing to the reader if the country is not broken down in sections as we visit her large cities, fishing villages, vacation resorts, and Eskimo communities. Therefore think of Alaska as divided into four sectional areas: Southeastern Alaska, Western Alaska, Interior Alaska, and Arctic Alaska.

SOUTHEASTERN ALASKA

Virginal forests, totem poles, peaceful fiords breathtaking in their beauty, majestic snow-capped mountain peaks proudly overseeing Alaskan wilderness, a picturesque coastline harboring inlets and bays only visited by men of an adventurous nature: this capsules Southeastern Alaska, better known as the Panhandle, a long strip of land bordering Canada south from Skagway to Ketchikan.

Visitors to Southeastern Alaska are assured of true exposure to the pioneer flavor commonly associated with Alaska in general. For instance, visit Sitka, the old Russian capital of Alaska.

Sitka

Sitka depends on fishing and lumbering for her eco-

nomic mainstay. The harbor is dotted by nearly a thousand fishing boats. Lumber and pulp mills are a symbol of modern engineering.

You will stay at the Sitka Hotel unless you wish to build a tree house. The hotel is reasonably comfortable for guests. Sitka's restaurants are not about to get a rating from the Cordon Bleu Gourmet Society, but the seafood is fresh and tempting. Be sure to visit St. Michael's Cathedral, a chapter from old Russia's influence in Alaska. The old Russian block house is another point of interest.

The Alaskan Pioneer's Home is a living monument for retired men and women who pioneered Alaska. If you are a good listener, you can leave with a treasury of stories related by the old timers.

The Sitka National Monument protects eighteen of Alaska's most outstanding totem poles. Totem poles tell stories by their weird, colorful figure carvings. Bring along a camera so you can send a snapshot back to mother-in-law. A good closeup will inform her that she is in your thoughts!

Should big game hunting or sport fishing be your pleasure, you will not leave Sitka disappointed.

Juneau

Juneau is the capital city of Alaska and quite properly presents a picture of modern advancement. Leading industries include lumbering, mining, trade, fishing and the ever popular tourist trade.

Juneau's visitors simply cannot be bored. The Territorial Historical Library and Museum has a complete display of Eskimo crafts and artifacts as well as one of Alaska's finest mineral displays.

Few glaciers can be reached by auto. An exception is Mendenhall Glacier, thirteen miles from the city. Glaciers are synonymous with Alaska; don't pass up this unforgettable ice display of nature's.

An air or boat trip to Glacier Bay National Monument is a must for those who wish to capture glaciers' spectacular beauty on film. Some glaciers are 1000 feet thick. The Muir Glacier rises 265 feet above water and is two miles wide. And that makes a lot of ice cubes! Icebergs are a frequent sight in Glacier Bay.

You don't have to be a Daniel Boone to enjoy the generous hunting and fishing provided by the area. All the comforts of home are yours at the Taku Lodge, Thayer Lake Lodge and Tonglass Lodge, available by short air hops out of Juneau. Moose, deer, bear, mountain goat, and an array of water fowl and game fish are taken from the Juneau area each year.

When in Juneau proper, stay at the Baranof Hotel. There is no finer hotel in the territory, although the Gastineau and Hotel Juneau enjoy a popular following.

If you are in Alaska during July, and chances are you will be, spend July 25-27 in Juneau and witness the famous Golden North Salmon Derby. This fishing event has an international charm. Enthusiasts compete from all over the world, perhaps inspired by prizes exceeding \$15,000.00. Anyone in Juneau during these three days may enter the derby.

Winter tourist enthusiasts will be pleased with Juneau's ski area. The bowl is located across Gastineau Channel. A tow rope or helicopter is the way to get up the ski slope.

Nerve, a fatalistic attitude, and good balance take care of the trip down.

Ketchikan

Ketchikan is the first Alaskan port of call for cruise ships. This is Alaska's southernmost city and her fleet of 2000 fishing vessels are colorful ambassadors of our new state.

Need I say that fishing is Ketchikan's major industry? Lumber is a smaller but thriving industry because of Ketchikan's ideal location, right in Tangass National Forest. Other Alaskan areas are more prominent for mining, although Ketchikan has the only uranium-producing mine in our 49th state.

Stay at the Ingersoll Hotel — enough said. Restaurant menus won't overwhelm you with their selection, but their food is wholesome, and there's always Alaska's lifesaver when one is doubtful what to order. You can never go wrong with seafood.

Ketchikan has tours of salmon factories, interesting but not earth-shattering. Hiking and mountain climbing are other attractions if you have mountain goat tendencies. However, there is one place you should visit, Totem Pole Park. This Indian village has the largest totem pole collection in the world. If you do not like totem poles, there are eighteen bars in Ketchikan where you can drown your sorrows.

Attention, fishermen! Salmon is the magic word here although the excellent trout fishing attracts many visitors. March through August is the time for Alaska's longest Salmon Derby. This should give you a clue about the size and

quantity of salmon available in Ketchikan waters.

Petersburg

Petersburg, located on Wrangell Narrows, has a definite Scandinavian influence, so all you tow-heads make it a point to spend some time at this beautiful fishing town.

Don't just drop in on Petersburg, as the Mitkoff Hotel has a limited number of rooms. However, the Scandinavian food and town charm are well worth a reservation in advance.

Norwegian holidays are celebrated by a good portion of Petersburg's populace of 2000 on May 17 and St. Hans Day in June. July 4 and the Yulefest in December mark other festive occasions.

Petersburg is the jumping-off place for sportsmen. The big game hunting and sport fishing are unqualifiedly excellent.

* * *

There are many towns I have left out because time and space demands I do so. For instance, the artist and strawberry lover will possibly enjoy Haines far more than Juneau. Haines' scenic beauty can only be recorded on canvas and its strawberries (3 to a cup) suggests why Haines' annual Strawberry Festival came into being. There is Whitehorse, capitol of the Yukon Territory, where the sportsman seeks challenging experiences in forest and stream. And there is Skagway, a memory of years gone by. The townspeople dress up in frontier costumes to greet the steamers arriving with visitors. Tourists long remember Skagway's Ghost Town, the Gold Rush Cemetery and the Old Pack Train Saloon.

WESTERN ALASKA

Rich farm land, glaciers, volcanos, vast unexplored

regions, Alaska's most modern city, productive Bristol Bay, the relentless and unforgiving Alaskan Range, the Alaskan Peninsula and the Aleutians, a chain of islands provocatively close to Russian Siberia, the dangerous Kodiak bear: this explains Western Alaska.

Anchorage

Alaska's largest city is Anchorage, with a population of 60,000. Anchorage can properly take its place among modern cities throughout the world.

The city's amazing growth can be partially attributed to the military. Anchorage houses the Alaska Military Command Headquarters. Fort Richardson and Elmendorf Air Base are on the city's outskirts. However, the most important factor in Anchorage's development occurred many years ago when the United States Government chose this city as headquarters for the Alaska Railroad.

Anchorage serves as the international center for European and Far Eastern flights over the North Pole. Anchorage is justly proud that its volume of air traffic ranks third in cities of the United States.

Millions have been spent on Anchorage's modern docking facilities. The city acts as the center for Alaskan trade, big business, and communication. Anchorage is preparing for additional expansion and prosperity because sizeable oil deposits have been discovered in the surrounding area. The city and suburbs team with the larger part of Alaska's total population. The tourist immediately feels the underlying excitement and activity that only great cities possess. Modern department stores, beauty shops, dial telephones, radio and television stations, restaurants and night clubs, hospitals,

fourteen story apartment houses, neon-lighted streets, curio shops, taxis, warehouses, ocean docks, canneries, expensive residential areas and housing developments, country club and golf course: you will find them all in Anchorage.

The big hotels are uniformly excellent. The Traveler's Inn has the slight edge in luxury, followed closely by the Westward Inn. The Westward Hotel is also known for its fine accommodations and service. Restaurants and clubs offer varied menus and entertainment, according to the visitor's whims. I have enjoyed masterpieces of French cuisine and have made a hasty back-window exit from a bar that served "everything."

A lover of the arts will appreciate the Anchorage Symphony Orchestra and Anchorage's big Little Theater.

Anchorage, like her sister cities, promotes all year-round celebrations. There is the Fur Rendezvous in February, complete with winter sports, dog races, parades, and a lovely queen. This annual event is commonly called the Mardi Gras of the North. A special feature is the All-Alaska Dog Sled Races with prizes exceeding \$6500.00, but the main attraction is the daily auction of furs held in front of city hall. Buyers come from all over the world to bid for Alaska's prime fur pelts. This might be the answer, men, for a do-it-yourself mink coat if you are being outmaneuvered by "the general."

The Chiguk Carnival is celebrated around Memorial Day. The Elmendorf Carnival is in August. The Festival of Music comes in June. Finally, the 4H Fair is in September.

People seeking the thrills of big game hunting and sport fishing often start their vacations in Anchorage because of the many outfitters' headquarters in this city. However, do

not expect to see moose or bear wandering around the thoroughfares. It's possible, but only if you prefer hair tonic to bonded bourbon.

Palmer

Palmer is the trading center of Matanuska Valley, an agricultural area reported to grow over 55% of the Alaskan farm products. Farmers and livestock men work hard to supply vegetable crops, beef, poultry, and dairy products because the growing season averages 116 days per year and the valley's soil is low in fertility. However, the valley's economy has been stable because there has never been a crop failure.

Palmer serves as headquarters for the Soil Conservation Service, the Alaska Department of Agriculture, the Geological Survey, and the Alaska Agricultural Experiment Station. The Geological Survey feels the valley has excellent oil possibilities. At present it is one of the largest coal areas in the state, and coal is actually the valley's second largest industry.

Palmer hosts the Matanuska Valley Fair during Labor Day weekend and has been known to attract over 26,000 visitors. Any tourist with a green thumb should attend this festive event. Make your reservations early at the Matanuska Hotel or Hyland Hotel.

Seward

Seward is mostly visited by sportsmen and those tourists who simply wish to spend a peaceful vacation at the lodges in the surrounding area.

Seward impresses its visitors with definite frontier

charm. The new Seward Hotel is the place to stay.

The main event of the year is the Fourth of July celebration. Notable is the Mt. Marathon foot race. The mountain climbed is a 3000 foot peak so this event takes a lot of shoe leather. The Seward Silver Salmon Derby in August fills Seward's hotels with as many as 2800 fishermen, eager to compete for the \$10,000.00 prize money.

Kodiak

Another town that sportsmen are likely to visit is Kodiak, situated on Kodiak Island. Russian explorers and fur traders established Kodiak as their base. Russian architecture is still evident.

Kodiak is well known for three things: the naval station, the fishing industry, including the finest king crab in the world, and the giant Kodiak bear. No other animal on the North American continent has so successfully captured the imagination of hunters.

When I visited Kodiak, I felt that I was in the Alaska associated with novels depicting the Northern frontier wilderness. I had come for the express purpose of bagging a trophy Kodiak bear.

All visitors land at the naval base air strip and are transported by bus to downtown Kodiak. From then on, they're on their own.

My bear-hunting companion, Arthur Crowley, and I, looked like human baggage racks as we staggered down Kodiak's main drag. We arrived exhausted at the Kodiak Hotel, the finest on Kodiak Island and the only one. Our room had indoor plumbing, an excellent omen before any Alaskan hunt.

Alf Madsen, famous hunting outfitter, picked us up and

hosted a welcome dinner at a "downtown" restaurant, twenty giant steps away from the hotel. The food was not in the same class as the furniture, silverware, and waitress — something our digestive tracts were most thankful for.

The next day Alf flew us by seaplane into the interior of Kodiak Island. When he brought us down on the lake by the hunting camp, I could only pray that Alf was a better outfitter than pilot. After that snappy airlift, Arthur and I devoted the rest of the day to polishing off the camp's medicinal alcohol supply.

Kodiak's lakes and rivers jealously guard some of the greatest salmon and trout in the world. Fishermen are not the only ones to feast on these shimmering delicacies. The Kodiak bear loves nothing better than a fish dinner. The bear come down from the mountains in early morning and at dusk to try their angling luck. Swift-moving forearms and razor-sharp claws do the work of rod and reel. The bear rarely go away hungry.

Hunters take advantage of the bears' passion for fish by stalking these magnificent fur trophies at the water's edge. However, I soon found that only sows (gals) with cubs (youngsters), or young boars (guys) venture in the clearing during daylight. Too many young bears foolishly expose themselves in such a manner each year. They invariably find the secret of eternal youth, compliments of the business end of a rifle. Hunters, eager to fill their license quota, take the path of least resistance and shoot these young bears, but true sportsmen prefer the more mature trophies found in thick cover and on mountain tops.

The big trophies are big because they are smart. Mature bear remain on high mountain ridges during daylight or lie

concealed on the sides of steep hills, practically unapproachable by man. Only after dark do the giants venture down to water, and they return to cover in the morning before the hunter thinks about what he will have for breakfast.

Therefore, if you wish to hunt big bear, be in excellent physical shape. It is not a sport for flat feet or coronary conditions. Furthermore, I do not suggest this hunt for those who are squeamish about heights. A mountain's a mountain and what goes up must come down.

Arthur Crowley spotted his trophy bear the second day of our hunt. We were cruising down Karluk Lake in our outboard-powered skiff, scanning the mountainsides for a moving black spot. This signifies a mature male bear. His pelt is much darker than the female's or a young boar's.

Luck smiled upon Arthur, for such a spot was picked up in our binoculars during the first hours of daylight. Unfortunately, the bear was headed up the mountain.

Arthur asked me if I would like to climb this little old mountain with him and be on hand to witness the big moment. Being a realist, I gave him a rather abrupt negative answer. So I'm not a proponent of togetherness, but my name is not Jack Armstrong either!

Arthur climbed his mountain and Arthur shot his bear. Meanwhile, I guarded the boat from field mice and experienced twinges of jealousy when the first shots echoed from the mountainsides.

The smiling Irishman spent the remaining twelve days of our stay basking in the sun, fishing quietly for trout, and reading pocket book mysteries. I spent the same period of time, becoming more and more frustrated, suffering from eye-strain, and glaring at Arthur. We saw plenty of bears, but

I wanted a trophy. No two Indian guides could have worked harder to grant my wish. Our daily routine was up at four A.M. and back to camp after dark. There were sow bears, cub bears, young male bears, a few stray grandmothers, but not one mature male in the passing parade. Admittedly, I had a lot of time to observe chipmunk amours and compare them with the habits of more aggressive squirrel swingers. Then there were porcupine quills to count and I practiced my bird calls at high noon.

I was not exactly the perfect companion on the last evening of our scheduled hunt. Arthur and the camp crew tactfully kept the word "bear" out of their campfire gossip. The cook offered me first choice of steaks and insisted that half the apple pie was mine. I was a brilliant conversationalist, all grunts and scowls.

Alf Madsen flew in the following morning to pick us up. Arthur had to return to his law practice in Los Angeles. We were loading our gear and Arthur's bearskin into the seaplane, when suddenly one of the guides turned to me and said, "I shaved for good luck. You stay here. We get your bear today."

The simplicity of his statement surprised me so that I agreed. Arthur and Alf were slightly confused but readily accepted my John Paul Jones decision.

Alf promised he would return tomorrow, though Arthur warned me not to count on it unless his landings improved. Alf's parting remark to my guide was, "Bill had better get his bear unless you feel like being staked out in his den." The respectful answer was a well-aimed squirt of tobacco juice at Madsen's boot.

Now came the moment of truth. The plane had taken

off. The remaining members of the team were as follows: a skeptical cook, now sorry he had given me one-half the pie, two eager guides chattering moronically away in Indian dialect, and yours truly, who wondered what the hell shaving had to do with hunting bear.

I was in a state of semi-shock as the guides led me into the skiff. Off we chugged. Three hours later I was determined to submit myself to a sanity test immediately upon reaching Los Angeles. I had not even seen a porcupine, never mind a fur-bearing beast. Then I saw a rock, an unbelievably strange formation resembling the outline of a huge bear. The rock was clear on top of a mountain and attracted my attention as the sunlight flashed upon it. The two guides viewed the rock through their binoculars and we spent the next half hour discussing this unusual granite formation. We continued down the shoreline and returned for another sweep of the area. On our way back I raised my glasses to restudy my "rock bear."

I checked and rechecked our position. I lined up landmarks. I rubbed my eyes. I gave a war whoop which caused the guides to hit the deck. My rock had disappeared. My rock had been a grand-daddy of Kodiak bears.

Mountain climbing is exhausting at best. Four hours of struggling and we reached the spot on top the mountain where my "rock bear" had last been seen. A beautiful view but no bear. We did find his enormous tracks leading to a dense thicket. No one relishes the thought of pursuing a giant Kodiak bear into thick cover. Bears must realize this too.

I spent the next agonizing hour playing hide n' seek with my potential trophy. Then the Kodiak bear decided to put a growling halt to our little game. Thickets parted and the

guides helpfully announced a bear was in the near vicinity. I did a ballet step trying to put shooting distance between me and my playmate. Amidst the confusion, I had my first close-up of a Kodiak's choppers.

He was a magnificent trophy and measured twelve feet and two inches, which put him in anybody's record class, even the Boone and Crockett Club, I am happy to say.

It did not matter about the backbreaking hours spent skinning him out or the cuts and bruises collected as we slipped and tumbled down the mountain in darkness. My guide was right. Seek and ye shall find.

Since I have been writing about one of Alaska's more prominent big game areas, permit me a few more words about hunting and fishing opportunities in general.

Alaska will always attract the sportsman, for where else on the North American continent is there offered such a variety of game animals, fowl, and fish? You have just read about the mammoth Kodiak bear. I will better acquaint you with polar bear, seal, and arctic wolves in the forthcoming pages of my "ridiculous diary." However, Alaska offers many other kinds of worthy game to the imaginative sportsman. I might add that the term "sportsman" is merely a figure of speech. The fairer sex consistently cause embarrassing moments at camp when they outshoot and outfish their "teachers."

The rare blue glacier bear is hunted between Lynn Canal and Cape St. Elias. Respectable-sized black bear roam over two-thirds of the state. Alaska's grizzly bear has always provoked wild shooting and wild tales. A word of caution about the fierce barren-land grizzly. Do not tackle him unless you have a reserve supply of nerve. He has the determination of a process server.

You most probably will hunt the Dall mountain sheep in the rugged Brooks Mountain Range north of the Arctic Circle. Mountain goat are found in the Coast Range and the Talkeetna and Chugach Mountains.

Every year sportsmen bag their Sitka black-tailed deer on the islands of Southeastern Alaska, and even occasionally on Yakutut and Kodiak Islands.

I personally feel a deer hunt should be the last thing on a sportsman's itinerary, as Alaska offers so many more rewarding trophies. For instance, no moose found anywhere can compare in size and stature with the Alaskan species. The Kenai peninsula offers the finest moose hunting.

Hunting caribou is not a true challenge to the hunter, partly because of their vast numbers and partly because they are not the brightest creatures in the world. Caribou bunch together when they sense impending danger. Should they decide to scatter when stalked by man or wolf, they settle down after traveling short distances. Caribou make mighty good eating, though, a fact which salves any sportsman's conscience.

The American elk are hunted in the coastal strip of the Alaska Peninsula and also the Kodiak area. They provide a better hunt than caribou because of their limited number as well as the thick cover they instinctively choose for protection.

Wolves and coyotes are considered predators by the Fish and Wildlife Service. These two species of animal attract many "earnest" hunters because of the \$50.00 bounty offered for each one killed.

Shotgun enthusiasts and gourmets share a mutual admiration for ptarmigan, grouse, and the numberless species of ducks and geese. A good eye, fast reflexes, and a healthy

appetite should be employed when hunting Alaskan game birds. I suggest you plan other activities during a day's bird hunt, for limits are filled before the sun has a chance to say good morning.

If your pleasure is fishing, build up your arm muscles. When I hooked my first king salmon, I truly appreciated the expression, "Having a tiger by the tail." The king salmon and silver salmon are all fight and no give.

Salmon must have given the old pep fight to Alaska's trout. Rainbow, Steelhead and Lake Trout do not give up until they hit the frying pan. The Dolly Varden, while not so worthy an opponent, is equally popular at mealtimes.

Speaking of mouth-watering goodness, do not pass up the Sheefish, a cross between the salmon and whitefish. A forty pound sheefish is not unusual in Alaskan waters. When you have one on the end of your line, plan to spend a little time in the vicinity. Somehow this fish objects strenuously to being the chef's guest of honor.

The Grayling, while not large in size, is large in heart. Three to four pounds of dynamite is the best way I can describe this Alaskan game fish.

So whatever your fishing preference may be, prepare yourself for the giants of these game fish species. You also might prepare your friends back home for another type of whopper unless you remember to keep a camera in readiness. No one believed the distance between my hands when I first tried to explain the size of Alaska's game fish.

Kenai

Western Alaska offers another great hunting and fishing area, Kenai Peninsula. The largest moose in the world are

found here, as well as brown bear and mountain sheep. The salmon and trout fishing is excellent too. The town of Kenai is proud of its Spur Motel. Every room has a bath, which is indeed welcomed and needed when you hit town during and after a hunting trip. Camps and lodges enjoy success because of the continuous parade of sportsmen who favor the area. Willard's Moose Camp represents the type of comfort that can be had amidst a wilderness.

Homer

The town of Homer has been exceedingly popular with tourists because of its annual Agricultural Fair in August. The event displays the agricultural and livestock products grown in the area. Homer's annual Winter Carnival in March is another festive event looked forward to by residents and tourists alike. I was told by an enthusiastic Chamber of Commerce representative that berry picking and clam digging were two other tourist attractions. I have tried neither sport in Homer, but I must conscientiously report, the town is one hell of a long way to go to pick berries and dig clams. The Baycrest Motel and the Heady Hotel are among the best. The seafood is excellent in Homer, but then so is it everywhere else throughout Alaska.

Valdez

Valdez is North America's furthest north ice-free port. Visitors are impressed by the scenic beauty of the Valdez area. It has a fishing fleet and a cannery, but the town's real importance to the state is that it serves as the main terminal point for large trucking outfits.

Motor enthusiasts will enjoy the Truck Road-eo in Au-

gust, a contest to determine the safest truck driver in the United States. Having driven on California highways for quite some time, I wish more trucking concerns would send their drivers to Valdez in August.

The Silver Salmon Derby commences June 1st and runs through August 31st.

The Valdez Hotel and Port Valdez Motel are most comfortable.

Cordova

Western Alaska's Cordova is referred to as "The Friendly City." Cordova is principally a fishing town and its canneries pack a sizable share of Alaska's razor clams and Dungeness crab. Cordova has a fine assortment of stores, and the Windsor Hotel, Northern Hotel, and Cordova Hotel house the majority of Cordova's visitors.

Cordova's King Salmon Fishing Derby is celebrated around Labor Day. Summer tourists enjoy swimming, boating, fishing and that old-time favorite, clam digging.

INTERIOR ALASKA

The splendor of Mt. McKinley, gold mining, mountain ranges, mining ghost towns, a modern metropolis, glaciers, hot springs, a national park, lodges, resorts, an educational center: this capsules Interior Alaska.

Fairbanks

Fairbanks, located in Tanana Valley, is the only city in Interior Alaska. It is the second largest city in Alaska and is rightfully proud of being in the largest gold mining district

in the United States. So plan a visit to Fairbanks' gold mines.

Other tours take in the University of Alaska and its world renowned museum, the Fairbanks Country Club, and the Farmer's Loop Agricultural District. Still another "must" for the Fairbanks visitor is a trip on the *M. S. Discovery*, an old-time stern-wheeler. This riverboat carries her tour passengers to Indian fish camps located on the Tanana River. Indians proudly display their method of tanning moose and caribou hides and also show how they catch salmon "Indian Style."

The Traveler's Inn is in a luxury class by itself. You'll like the Nordale Hotel too. Restaurants are uniformly excellent, their menus featuring international gourmet specialties. Night owls particularly enjoy Fairbanks. Even the best restaurants close at respectable hours, which permits the visitor to go on the prowl. Night club entertainment, jazz sessions, piano bars, juke boxes give the town a lively after-dark tempo.

The month of March is a high point in Fairbanks' social calendar. The city's famous Ice Carnival takes place then. The celebration has numerous festive events, including a torchlight parade, dog-team races, a snowshoe baseball game, ski sailing, ice hockey, auto ice-racing and colorful native Eskimo dances. The arts and crafts exhibit is one of the finest of its type in Alaska. High point of the festivities comes when Miss Alaska is crowned. The Coronation Ball is attended by Miss Alaska, her court, and everyone still able to walk.

March also heralds the colorful North American Dog Sled Championships. The drivers of the sleds are called

“mushers,” not to be confused with “lovers.” The competition is keen for prize purses amounting to \$2500.00.

Fairbanks is sometimes called “The City of Light” because of its peculiar position in the northern hemisphere. During parts of summer, Fairbanks has light twenty-four hours a day, and in midwinter, Fairbanks has but a few hours of daylight.

On June 21st of each year at exactly 10:30 P.M., an umpire shouts, “Play ball,” and opens Fairbanks’ annual Midnight Sun Baseball Game. The Alaskan midnight sun provides all necessary light for this game, whose players include the finest baseball athletes in the state.

July is the time for the Fairbanks-Nanana Boat Marathon for inboard and outboard racing enthusiasts. However, Fairbanks’ Golden Days are what highlights this month. Male residents must wear beards. Female residents are asked to shave to avoid confusion! Events include the World Champion Gold Panning Contest. The city’s festivities suggest a wild-west-Mardi-Gras mood, complete with kangaroo court and beard-growing contests.

When you visit Fairbanks, consider a trip to Circle Hot Springs and Chena Hot Springs. Both vacation resorts assure the traveler a refreshing intermission during an Alaskan trip. I am told both resorts have bath waters comparable only to Europe’s finest hot spring resorts.

Mt. McKinley National Park

Interior Alaska’s proudest possession is Mt. McKinley National Park, two million acres of spectacular Alaska Range wilderness located between Fairbanks and Anchorage. The

highest mountain in North America, Mt. McKinley is the park's most prominent landmark. An abundance of wild life flourishes in the park, so camera enthusiasts are assured of a collection of film treasures. The annual migration of caribou commences in July, and literally thousands of these animals can be seen moving along the game trails.

The McKinley Hotel is a leading resort, well worth the trip itself. Park rangers act as hosts in the evening and show color slides and motion pictures of the park.

Camp Denali is another famous tourist attraction. The camp is situated on the northwestern edge of Mt. McKinley National Park. Boating and fishing on nearby Wonder Lake and jeep trips for photographing wild game are but a few of the camp's activities.

Nenana

The small town of Nenana is the scene of Alaska's annual Spring Ice Classic. Nenana becomes the focal point of attention for every resident of Alaska once a year.

The Ice Classic is officially called a game, but it is still a lottery any way you look at it. Residents purchase tickets which give them the opportunity to guess the day, hour and minute that the ice breaks on the Tanana River at the town of Nenana. The cost of each guess is a dollar. The winner of the lottery collects over \$100,000.00. What happens to the rest of the money is simply not a polite question.

I am happy to report that gambling syndicates have not yet turned their attention to this event. Perhaps the discovery of aqua lungs and all-weather rubber suits will inspire a few unsavory characters to make a sneaky underwater approach and then "fix the ice." A word of caution to hoods:

when one puts on a rubber suit one looks amazingly like a big fat seal. Remember you are in Eskimo country.

ARCTIC ALASKA

Frozen arms, Eskimo villages, frozen legs, the midnight sun, frozen hands, polar bear, seal and whales, frozen feet, the devastating Brooks Mountain Range, frozen noses, the Bering Sea, frozen lips, fields of multi-colored spring and summer flowers, frozen ears, the lonely howl of arctic wolves, frozen beards, an untold mineral wealth: this is Arctic Alaska.

This gigantic area of 200,000 square miles is sparsely populated because of harsh weather and unproductive farm land. Nevertheless, rich mineral deposits are insensitive to sub-zero temperatures, thereby making parts of Arctic Alaska notable for mining. No area in Alaska offers a greater challenge to the sportsman and pioneer. I can not imagine an Alaskan trip complete without a visit to the Arctic. Here the tourist may realistically view the constant struggle of elements, animals and man.

Nome

Nome is a trading center for Eskimo communities and mining districts. Nome's gold mines are highly productive and tremendous deposits of copper, nickle, lead, tin and iron make this one of Alaska's richest areas.

The city also serves as the judicial and business center for northwestern Alaska. A good proportion of Nome's 2000 inhabitants are Eskimos. Native arts and crafts flourish. Seal-skin boots and mukluks, fur parkas, Eskimo dolls and ivory carving make excellent buys for Nome's visitors.

Winters are so cold that water cannot be piped to houses. Trucks make daily home deliveries, collecting their water at local warm springs. I imagine that when a truck breaks down, the driver automatically finds himself in the ice cube business.

Nome is proud of the tri-weekly *Nome Nugget*, Alaska's oldest newspaper and the only newspaper in northwestern Alaska. There is even television this far north in the world. Nome has one station.

When April rolls along, residents celebrate the Nome Dog Team Sweepstakes. Teams are entered from all over the Arctic. Guests are welcome to take a sled ride, an excellent idea to keep the old circulation going. Nome goes all out, too, for its Fourth of July celebration. Festivities include a parade, not a long one, mind you, and Eskimo games.

The Polaris Hotel and North Star Hotel offer surprisingly modern accommodations and their food is excellent. A friend of mine travelled to Nome just to try out its famous seafood and reindeer steak.

Kotzebue

Kotzebue, fifty miles north of the Arctic Circle, is one of Alaska's best known Eskimo villages.

Wien Airlines offers a tour to Kotzebue and guests stay at Wien Airline's Arctic Hotel. The Rotman Hotel offers accommodations also, but somehow the name has scared off many tourists this far north.

A Wien Hotel menu offers such delicacies as sourdough hot cakes, reindeer steak, and pickled Beluga Muktuk. Muk-tuk is part of the white whale — I haven't the vaguest idea what part, as my desire to taste this delicacy evaporated the

moment I asked for the Eskimo translation of muktuk. Perhaps you will like whale, but there again that's what makes horse races.

A saving grace to conventional appetites is Kotzebue's delicious Arctic sheefish. Attention berry pickers: wild blueberries and cranberries grow abundantly in season. Ask your travel agent when these berry bushes shake off the snow.

Kotzebue serves as headquarters for polar bear and wolf hunters in March and April. Trophy-class polar bear have been taken out of the Kotzebue area, although my personal preference for polar bear hunting is at the top of the world, Point Barrow. Fewer sportsmen hunt this area and if you wonder why, read the rest of the book.

Kotzebue's Winter Carnival in March is the social event of the year, featuring dog sled races, Eskimo games and festivities. I think it only fair to clarify the term "carnival." New Orleans gala pageantry is one thing; Eskimos whooping it up is quite another. Now I can sleep better.

When the ice breaks up in mid-June, visitors may watch or participate in the only Beluga Whale Derby in the world. All whales must be turned over to the Eskimos, which I am sure is most agreeable to the average tourist.

July offers exciting fishing opportunities for sheefish, grayling, Arctic pike and trout. Kotzebue's Fourth of July festival features boat races, Eskimo dances, blanket tossing (definitely not an all-year round event), foot races, and yo-yo contests. You haven't lived until you've seen an Eskimo whipping around a yo-yo. An Arctic Circle Beauty Queen is elected during the carnival and she reigns over every event with the possible exception of being tossed in a blanket.

Visitors spend fascinating hours watching Eskimos work

on jade, ivory, and fur clothing. All are excellent buys this far north.

Summer tourists can photograph native dancing every night. During the day they ride in umiaks, Eskimo boats made of walrus skin. Dog sled teams ride passengers over sand with almost as much ease as if the sleds were on snow. At least that is what the Eskimo sled drivers claim, although the sled dogs' expressions told me differently.

Barrow

Point Barrow is indeed a fitting place for the last stop on our travel itinerary. One step further and you are in the Arctic Ocean. Point Barrow is Alaska's most northern point of civilization. This fact is significantly implied by the name of Wien Airlines' "Top o' The World Hotel." I confess I didn't see this hotel when I arrived at Barrow from my polar bear hunt, but perhaps the blinding snow had something to do with it.

Barrow can be visited from spring through early fall. Springtime attracts mostly polar bear, seal and wolf hunters to this Arctic outpost. The majority of the tourists prefer summer's milder weather. Frankly, after my little March sortie to Barrow, I don't blame them.

Barrow's tourist attractions include Eskimo dances and games, dog team rides, and kayak rides. I would like to stress the point to all women's clubs and church groups that there are no blanket tossing events in Barrow! The big annual celebration comes in July when the first whale is caught. The entire population goes wild with excitement, for whaling means money in the family till and meat in the storehouse.

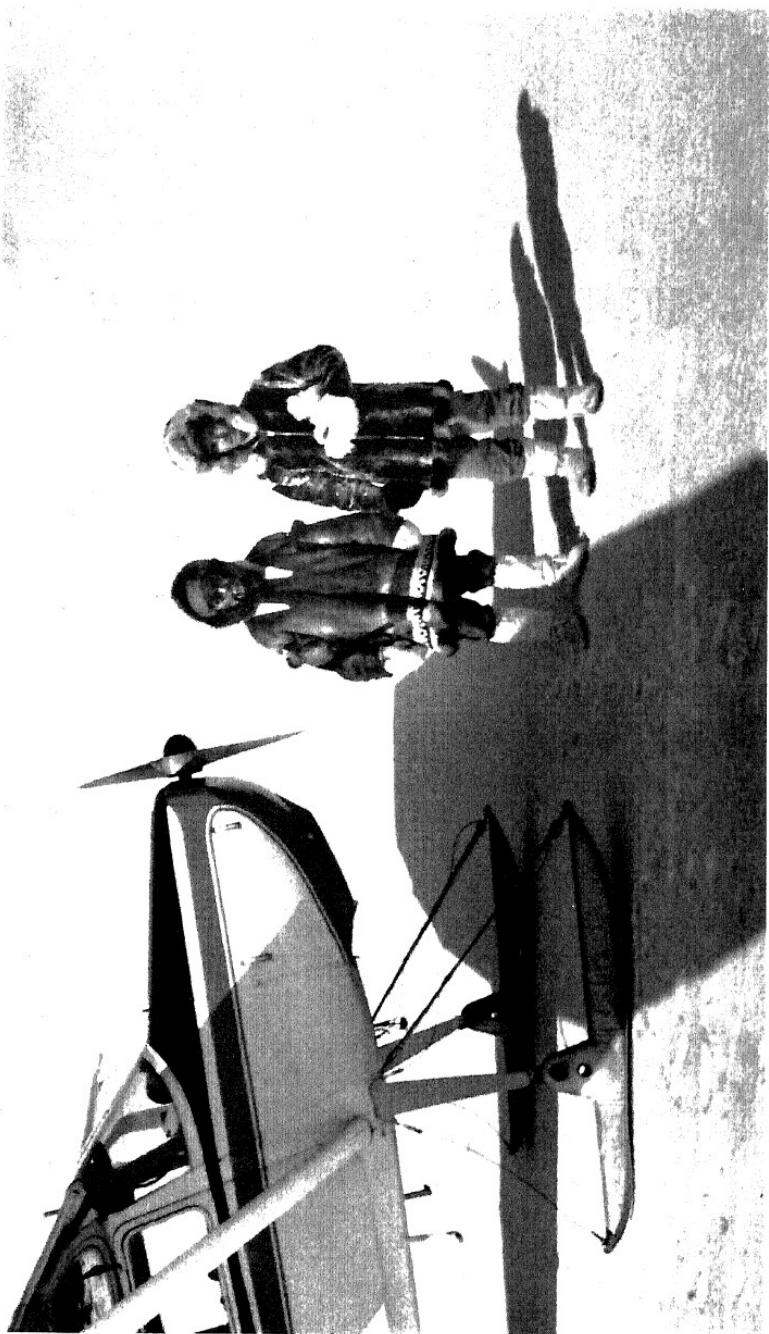
I have tried not to make this introductory section sound like a travelogue and yet I realize that describing a country's tourist opportunities doesn't exactly leave the reader breathless from excitement. I trust that the remaining chapters will convey another impression of Alaska and, I might add, one equally true at the time.

When my publisher read the original manuscript minus this "Trip Through Alaska" section, he snapped "Dammit all, Holmes, you don't even like sled dogs. The tourist bureau will have you shot on sight." My conscience and publisher joined forces. Well, the book is published and I am told I may return to Alaska.

W.D.H.

A SQUARE IN THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

An Alaskan Hunt



Arthur Crowley and author pose for a picture with their best Arctic girl friend,
'The Arctic Tern.'

April 4

Arthur Crowley and I, believe it or not, made Flight 657 bound for Seattle, Washington. I express wonderment at this achievement because of a series of farewell parties held in Los Angeles the past week. Apparently our friends either didn't want us to go Arctic hunting or felt our chances of returning were nil. Most alcoholic beverage stock hit a new high on the stock exchange these last mardi gras days and sleep was an unknown quantity.

6:30 a.m. saw Arthur, with his bow and arrows, and me with a 300 Weatherby and 375 Winchester, clamber aboard our DC6B. We instantly fell into a deep sleep, although fellow passengers might have tagged it a stupor. The last thing I heard, before slipping into this welcome state of unconsciousness, was Crowley mumbling how he couldn't understand our being three hundred pounds overweight and we would have been financially ahead if we had bought the airline. I answered his remark with an indelicate snore.

Seattle was uneventful, although a friend thoughtfully met us and steered "the great white hunters" to a quiet cocktail lounge, where he produced "the hair of the dog that bit us." Let's call a spade a spade right here and now. This remedy for floating heads simply does not work.

Arthur and I caught a Pan American flight out to Fairbanks, Alaska, more loaded than the plane's luggage compartment. One big guess what we did on this flight? Looked at the breath-taking scenery en route? Asked our flight crew about interesting landmarks? Wrote postcards to all our friends? We slept.

We put down at Fairbanks and had our first introduction to nippy weather. When they opened the plane's door, the smile I reserved for Alaska froze on my face. Pan American's field manager is an expert in spotting undernourished tourists, for he snapped his fingers and a team of burly assistants half carried, half led us down the ramp and into the warm waiting room.

Pan American had thoughtfully alerted the press that two idiots were headed toward the Arctic Ice Pack to hunt polar bear, ugrug (giant bearded seal), and Arctic wolves. The way the press received Arthur gave me the clue that there must have been an additional coded message that Crowley was the bigger idiot — not physically, that is. Arthur wanted to be the first white man to kill a polar bear with a long bow on the Ice Pack. When I explained to the reporters that I hunted with conventional firearms, I was no longer included in the interview. However, one reporter did ask me what I wanted most to accomplish in our hunt. "To come back," was my answer. Then no one spoke to me, not even Arthur.

I must say everyone in Fairbanks was most hospitable and attempted further to break down our physical health in Fairbank's most exclusive cocktail lounge. All other spots serving liquid refreshment are commonly referred to as saloons.

As I write this, the frightening thought occurs to me that all potential Carrie Nations reading my hunting memoirs will attempt to contact Arthur and me in order to save us. Please don't! It's later than you think and furthermore, we were no more, no less than victims of the pleasant circumstance of farewell festivities. If it will make any potential soul savers feel better, Arthur and I both knew Fairbanks was the last time that we would see a nip for a goodly time. The reason is an interesting one. Alaska is a territorial possession

run by the United States Federal Government. (The author made his expedition to the Arctic Circle prior to Alaska becoming a state.) The governor of the territory wisely allowed its far-flung communities to pass laws deemed wise for progress and safety. The village council at Point Barrow, our jumping-off spot on the Arctic Ocean, knew full well that alcohol and sub-zero temperatures, like fire and gasoline, do not make for a happy, healthy existence. So the council, consisting mainly of Eskimos, wisely banned the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages there. Occasionally an Arctic resident slurps down a little wood alcohol, but then again, same resident loses his marbles and eyesight shortly thereafter.

I must comment on Fairbanks' social night activities for the wandering hunter, as an incident I experienced there left my ego shattered. Immediately after checking into the Traveler's Inn, a modern-type motel Las Vegas would be proud of, Arthur and I went in search of a last fling. There is a street suspiciously bordering the city limits where the majority of Fairbanks' nightclubs are to be found; very loud bands, very raw liquor, and a startling lack of menus aptly describes these saloons, and of course there are girls. I am sure we did not fully appreciate their aesthetic and physical beauty, having arrived from Hollywood, California. However, I am told — prospectors, trappers, and construction workers who have been in the wilderness for six months think the lovelies of the world have made Fairbanks their permanent residence.

In one entertainment emporium, Art and I were offered a table (with chairs) and the owner personally came over to take the order of the two strange, unbearded gentlemen. He confidentially told us we would live longer if we would order the pink champagne at \$40.00 a bottle. Neither of us was

quite sure whether this prehistoric-looking ape was knocking his own liquor or invading our rights of the four freedoms. Being babes in the woods, we had left our bowie knives and lugers at our motel; so we settled on the carbonated cherry syrup. The management had found two live ones. The next course of events included a bowl of peanuts, \$1.00 charge, a partly consumed bag of potato chips, \$1.50, and two sirens of Clara Bow vintage. The girls dressed like twins, with black satin gowns, spangled shoes and bags, hair in pompadour, and false teeth.

We all enjoyed an animated conversation of at least ten words the next hour. Finally when our gum-snapping beauties realized no more corks would fly, they heaved themselves out of our laps in search of new mullets. Now for the coup de gras. I called for the check and found a \$7.50 charge per girl, per hour, for talking to the customers. We protested and the indignant owner informed us this was the going rate and were we looking for a beef? We had a tight traveling schedule to keep or this Arctic Sinbad would have been startled to find his peanuts elsewhere than on the table. Upon leaving this establishment, I gave a sigh of relief that I hadn't held hands with my charmer — couldn't have paid for it.

April 5

Arthur and I left our warm rooms at the Traveler's Inn, filled our lungs with sub-zero air, and coughed all the way to the airport. They have an ingenious way of knocking off tourists up here. The plane leaves for Point Barrow at 6:00 a.m. and the hotel coffee shop opens up at 6:30 a.m. Just enough time for the traveler to consider seriously whether he will miss the plane. Then common sense takes over when a quick

memory flash reminds you that planes leave only three times a week for Point Barrow, weather permitting and according to the whims of the dispatcher. Fortunately, the airport coffee shop was open. I imagine they feel obligated to keep the pilots alive.

Take-off time was punctual, which was a bit of a shock to airport personnel and travelers alike. The run between Fairbanks and Point Barrow is an experience in itself. The pilots followed the canyon that winds its way through the Brooks Mountain Range, that formidable barrier of ice and rock which separates Point Barrow from the rest of the World. I am sure the pilots thought they were doing us a favor as they skimmed alongside granite juts and pointed out these strange, timeless formations. I cannot accurately describe this "thirteenth wonder of the world" as one cannot see when one has his eyes clamped shut! Somehow we got through the Brooks Range — mind you, I did not say over it — and started our last lap over the ice-covered Arctic Prairie leading to Barrow.

At one point we passed a herd of caribou. The senior pilot asked us if we would care to take some pictures. I had visions of our DC3 dive-bombing the beasts and the accommodating cockpit boys attempting to put the plane between the legs of a leaping animal for an interesting shot. Arthur must have had the same premonition, for he informed the pilot there was no film in our cameras.

The stewardess served us a feast — a sandwich and apple — and two hours later we approached tiny black specks on the horizon.

Point Barrow, garden spot of the Arctic. I shall not dwell on personal impressions of Point Barrow. Neither conscience nor censorship would permit this. But to clue in my readers, if

any of you happen to catch the wrong plane and land at Point Barrow, be philosophical. You can't get the gold ring every time.

Barrow consists of approximately sixty shacks, five lean-tos, and a smattering of quonset huts housing members of the Army Signal Corps. I dared not inquire what these uniformed gentlemen had done to get stationed here, but I am sure even running away with a general's wife would not provoke such an assignment. The only information the men themselves volunteered was that they were the living replicas of the unknown soldier. Aside from military personnel, at last count, there were 191 Eskimo men, women, children, and sled dogs residing in this metropolis. The census taker refuses to interview polar bears and seals.

In all fairness, there are many wonderful persons residing at Point Barrow, many of whom devote their lives to pioneering this wilderness and assisting the tiny population to live the best they can. This is no easy task, considering the constant battle with the elements and the practically non-existent living conditions. The word "hardship" is unknown to these people, for hardship is an everyday condition of life. Nothing comes easy in the Arctic, with, perhaps, the exception of death. Take men like Tommy, who runs the local trading posts. For years Tommy has been in debt to keep his fellow Eskimos from starving. There are the Reverend Bill Wartes, a former B-25 pilot in World War II, and his wife, who preach the way of God, be it by working in their tiny church in Point Barrow or by flying in their single-engine Cessna to far-flung Eskimo villages and fishing camps. When weather keeps Bill grounded, you are likely to see him disappear across the field of broken ice in a dog sled. Bud Helmericks, our guide for this trip, and his wife are also pioneers

in their own right. The Helmericks have lived in the Arctic for many years and are the senior white residents in this part of the world. Bud has flown supplies and medicine whenever and wherever needed, often ignoring treacherous weather so that an Eskimo mother would live to see her baby or so that stranded hunters on floating ice would not die of starvation. Bud is not a rich man; few Eskimos, however grateful, can pay for the cost of revving up his plane. I could go on describing other worthy personalities, but this is not a story of Point Barrow, merely a glimpse at the Arctic Circle's biggest city.

When Arthur Crowley and I stepped off the Wien plane, we knew for the first time what the word "cold" means. Fairbanks was a Miami Beach in comparison. Point Barrow's International Airport, a two-by-four shack, fortunately boasted a pot stove, or this would undoubtedly be the last entry of this diary. After we'd checked our sixteen pieces of luggage, an air-conditioned truck (every other floor board missing) backed up to the door and the Crowley-Holmes entourage was tossed aboard.

A thirty-minute ride brought us in front of the Reverend Bill Wartes' house, where the minister and our guide, Bud Helmericks, were waiting to thaw us out.

I must relate one incident which took place before Bud flew us to our main hunting camp, some 350 miles east along the Arctic Ice Pack and inland to the prairie. Arthur and I had brought along twice as much equipment and clothing as we needed — most hunters know what I mean; so the ritual commenced of unpacking, repacking, and putting useless things in cartons. Eventually we were sensibly packed, so the Reverend Bill Wartes suggested we store the rest of our gear in his church attic. Crowley went down to the Cessna 170-B to

help gas up the plane, while Bud Helmericks and I hauled the cartons and suitcases to the nearby church. The attic had a small door entrance. Looking back on the incident, I do remember Bud moving along carefully on a two-by-four board. Wanting to show my boy scout training, I entered the semi-darkness with arms filled with cartons. I was in the process of saying "Here, Bud, let me help you put . . ." I never finished the sentence. Both feet planted themselves down on half-inch-thick beaver board insulation. I felt a dropping sensation — and if I had had the wits to yell "Geronimo" it would have been a perfect jump. I don't know how many of you fallen through a church attic or, I should say, almost fallen through. My guardian angel supplied me with a ceiling beam to hang onto, or my drop would have been complete onto the altar twenty feet below, give or take a few inches. Swinging like a playful chimpanzee, I managed to drop-kick the altar's left bank of candles and give the Church's Eskimo janitor a playful nudge in the neck with my Arctic pack boots. Ironically, poor Mokab was sweeping up a few dust spots below when Holmes, insulation and false ceiling swept down on his unsuspecting self. As I often thought later, I am thankful this display of gymnastics did not occur during an actual service. The Eskimo people are strongly superstitious. I would have either been the second Arctic Messiah or had entire villages sticking pins in my whalebone image.

Bud and I then joined Arthur at the airstrip, where I first met the Arctic Tern, our guide's valiant little Cessna plane, which became such an important emotional and physical part of our trip.

The Arctic Tern sped us across the Ice Pack, and we landed at our main hunting camp. George and Nanny Woods, the Eskimo family we were to live with for the next three

weeks, were waiting for us at Bud's improvised landing strip.

Streaks of the midnight sun ushered us into a shack-like affair as Art and I took a long look at "home."

Frankly, we were pleasantly surprised because the wall was not caribou skin, the floor not ice, and the ceiling not bark strips. This was a house, perhaps not a potential seller on the California real estate market, but nevertheless a house with such features as beaver board insulation and wooden frame. The interior might have been a challenge to a decorator, but we did not come up here as journalists for *House Beautiful*. Our home boasted one fair-sized room with a curtained partition modestly hiding the first bathroom ever shipped to Alaska. The room's decor consisted of two Civil-War beds, two canvas cots, *avec sag*, and individual heaps of blankets and sleeping bags lined against one wall, a Sears Roebuck dinette set, three hand-made wooden "easy" chairs (I say "easy" because one had to approach them with this frame of mind), two kerosene lamps, and a wood stove Martha Washington invented flap jacks on. Rifles, a guitar, and an eight-day clock, minus hands, decorated the walls, while the ceiling resembled a massive spider web of clothesline laden with last summer's wash.

After Art and I had "settled down," which meant placing our gear on the two vacant cots, we met the rest of the family. First, the guitar player, Lydia, a very pretty and shy sixteen-year-old Eskimo lass. Then her mother, Nanny, toothless and lovable. Next came George Woods, seventy years young, and somehow meeting him made my mind review history lessons covering the Ice Age. Opiak followed on the reception line; twenty-seven year old Opiak is George's and Nanny's only surviving son, the other four boys having succumbed to tuberculosis years ago. I shook hands with Joe, Opiak's adopted

brother. Joe came to dinner some years back and liked Nanny's cooking. Finally we met seven-year-old Marshall and three-year-old Della Mae. Marshall and Della Mae have been living with the Woods family the past year while the children's mother is bedridden with tuberculosis in Point Barrow. She could no longer care for the little tikes.

We were invited to meet the fifteen sled dogs howling their greeting outside, but we assured George and Nanny that we would shake each paw in the morning.

After tea, bread, and jam, Art and I curled up in our sleeping bags with mingled emotions — thankful we were finally here and yet, wondering why.

April 6

Today was the appointed time to get down to the serious "pre hunt" training, a phase of our trip which Bud Helmericks insists is a necessity for existence in the Arctic. And who should know better than Bud, certainly the most experienced guide and pilot in this land of the midnight sun?

It takes more than simply an affable nature to gain the respect Bud commands from Eskimos and white settlers alike. This man Helmericks, who will guide us for the next three weeks over parts of the Arctic never traveled before, has spent the greater part of his life as a bush pilot and explorer in his own right. No exaggeration can be attached to the statement that Bud Helmericks has lived longer in the Arctic Ice Pack and knows more about the Arctic's wild game than any other white man alive today. In short, once I had spent one hour with Bud, yours truly felt that he would see the bright lights of Los Angeles again.

Bud insists his hunting clients go through a basic training course even before an Arctic trophy is lined up in their rifle

scopes. Those to whom hunting is a new experience might go through various drills for a week, while seasoned sportsmen need only a day or two to get back into shape. It is understandable that Bud must have a pretty fair idea how his clients shoot and how fast they can run, since shooting and running are both requisites for Arctic hunts. I knew I could run fast from previous occasions not necessarily connected with polar bears. As far as shooting my 300 Weatherby goes, or any other weapon for that matter, no hunter can practice enough.

I had not the slightest idea what was happening when my Eskimo friends woke me up this morning. Nanny was shouting some native philosophy in my ear, the baby was screaming, and one of the sled dog puppies had sneaked into the cabin, desperately vying for the honor of washing my face — not to mention the greatest shock of all. Some mental giant thought it would be nice to crank up the old phonograph and play an Elvis Presley record. It is my humble opinion that one cannot wake up to this type of entertainment without experiencing emotional disorders — hound dog lovers excluded.

I made the near-fatal mistake of consuming everything on the breakfast table, including three cups of Nanny's coffee. At the risk of being put on the Legion of Decency's list, I would like to advise future Arctic hunters that one's basic metabolism and habits are quite different in weather forty below zero. Therefore, the Eskimo version of coffee serves a functional, medicinal purpose, and unless you wish to spend the better part of your hunt shoveling holes in the ice, I suggest you become better acquainted with your pharmacist.

Four hours later Bud gently helped Arthur and me to his firing range, actually a flat stretch of ice with various bulls-eye targets on stakes every one hundred yards. Bud impressed on us that a hunter has usually only *one shot*, two

shots at the most with Arctic game; further, one had better be ready when opportunity knocks, for such trophy specimens as record-class polar bear and ugrug (rare giant bearded seal) are scarce.

Ever tried firing a 375 magnum Winchester and a 300 magnum Weatherby for an afternoon's sport? Well, don't, unless you are promoting liniment sales. Actually, considering their killing power, these rifles do not have excess recoil. But they are not 22s either.

I think more out of desperation than anything else, Arthur and I finally began to shoot decent patterns. Knowing Bud's meticulous rules, I had the strange feeling I would still be on that damn firing range the following Christmas if I turned in a virginal bulls-eye. Single and rapid fire up to six hundred yards were the requirements, and I might add that I accompanied my shots over two hundred yards with a little prayer.

We staggered off the firing line, and for the next few hours Bud taught us how to drive the dog sled teams assigned to us. We had seven dogs per sled, the leader alone and then the others two abreast. The command "Gee" means turn left, "Haw," turn right, and general screaming and swearing, keep the sled dogs on a straight path. The driver rides behind the sled standing on its runners, jumping off and dragging his feet when he wants his dog team to stop.

I think the most difficult thing I had to accept in the Arctic was the Eskimo's attitude of complete indifference toward and inconsideration of their sled dogs. Many times this indifference was accompanied by out-and-out cruelty. Arctic residents tell me that Alaskan Huskies and similar blood lines cannot be trusted and are vicious. They support their claims by stating that Alaskan sled dogs kill more people each year

than any wild Alaskan animals do. Well, this may be true, but if I were a sled dog and the only kindness I was given was the working end of a chain, whip and club, I would be planning someone's obituary too. However, today's Eskimo is very much like his ancestors a thousand years ago. The younger generation is now receiving some educational and religious benefits, but it will take tremendous time and money to get below the existing surface.

Our final training phase this afternoon was "Operation Flat-on-you-know-what." In the event that breaking ice prevented us from stalking polar bear by dog sled, then we would spot the bear by plane. At first this might sound unsportsman-like, but read on. From a standpoint of personal safety, I would prefer to hunt bear by dog sled any time, the reason being the treacherousness involved in landing a light ski plane on the Arctic Ice Pack. To the untrained eye the entire Ice Pack seems to be one big runway, except for occasional mountains of ice jutting proudly above the monotonous landscape. Yet the slightest difference in shading can mean treacherous formations of broken ice hiding just below the snow's thin surface. Another danger to the pilot landing his ship on the Ice Pack is the wide crevices camouflaged by light snowfall. Take your choice, broken ice or crevices; let your plane's skis tangle with either and you join a long obituary list of Arctic bush pilots — and passengers.

Regardless of the unpleasantries, Arthur and I had to understand the mechanics of leaping clear of our moving plane, equipment and all, once Bud had made contact with terra firma.

Bud timed us getting out of the stationary plane, running clear of the tail section, spotting the bear (we used a barrel), taking a flying prone leap in the snow, and squeezing off

three shots. Bud felt we should accomplish these gymnastics within thirty seconds. My debut took three minutes, twenty-two seconds, and a crippled shin. Funny? Some time you try to pile out of a Cessna, thirty pounds of fur parka on your body, holding a cannon. All I know is that a polar bear would have had time to tie a bib around his neck before trying me out as his main entree.

Practice did not make perfect this afternoon, but at least Arthur and I came close to the half-minute mark.

Bud does not seem discouraged. On second thought, why should he be? We are doing the leaping.

As I get ready to greet my sleeping bag with love and affection, the impact of this adventure is beginning to reach me. I am thankful I have Arthur as a companion, a guide like Bud, and the Eskimo Woods family. We have all been laughing at the ridiculous antics of pretraining, and yet there is a tone of graveness beneath it all. Perhaps all laughter has a hollow sound in the Arctic Circle, for this land and its occupants, man and animal, have little time for anything except the constant struggle for survival. Good night.

April 7

Our first Sunday in the Arctic. The weather has been perfect, and seeing the sun spill over the ice-covered prairie made me realize no one could ask for a more pleasant hunting day. The outside temperature was a balmy zero and I was at peace with the world. Nanny's coffee was knocking the pot around, and I could practically see my polar bear skin adorning my den floor at home.

After a breakfast of hot cakes and coffee (?), Arthur and I got our gear together in anticipation of the big moment

when our hunt would actually start. Then Bud Helmericks gently took us aside and told us the facts of life. Sunday is a day of rest — a day of the Lord's — for the Eskimos, and they frown upon hunting unless it becomes a necessity for survival. Since we were living as guests of the Eskimos, their rules were our rules. It took us only a few brief moments to realize who were the truly civilized ones — and very, very quietly I slipped back to my cot. Then other things fell into place. I had never seen the Woods family pick up a fork at the table without saying grace, and the Eskimos I encountered in Point Barrow were humble, simple and shyly helpful. There is one more virtue easily attributed to the Eskimo and that is honesty. For instance, a locksmith in the Arctic would declare bankruptcy. Stealing is a moral crime to an Eskimo, though offering his wife to a house guest is a hospitable gesture. I might add the writer does not speak from actual experience in either instance. Quite seriously though, it never ceased to amaze me when I saw food and gasoline caches marked by flags all over the Ice Pack. Both commodities are worth their weight in gold. Fuel for heat and, for a fortunate few, transportation. Food, the difference between life and death. Some Eskimos go hunting for literally weeks on end without success and must rely on their valuable stored food reserves to keep alive.

Another indication of the Eskimo's and white Arctic resident's standards is the way fish and game laws are strictly abided by. It would take every fish and game warden in the United States to patrol this immense area. Yet few cases of poaching are recorded, as the law of supply and demand is inherently understood by all. Further, wherever the missionary has traveled, the firm belief in the Ten Commandments

is quite evident. When trouble and breaking of regulations arise, they can usually be associated with "civilized" Caucasians who drift through Alaska because of service commitments, construction and defense jobs, or the temporary lure of fortune seekers.

I hope the reader will excuse my literary wanderings in this and future Sunday entries, but it is a good time to acquaint you a little better with the Arctic and yours truly. From what I have been told to expect on hunting trips, there will be little room for philosophizing the other six days.

One thing I would like to slip in now is a personal explanation of why I enjoy hunting. I trust some of the people who in the past have stamped me "killer" will better understand the "feeling" of hunting.

Personally, I am not a brave man, nor have I a list of above-average capabilities. I love to hunt, if for no other reason than to try to regain a finer set of values all too often lost in the civilized parts of the world. Whenever I have hunted the jungle or sought adventure on mountain peaks, peace and security quickly replace the hypocrisies and false values we accept and live by in our "normal" every day existence. I have read with amusement and sometimes distaste, articles by certain psychologists analyzing the sportsman, the creature who seeks pleasure with a rifle. According to these brain experts, the sportsman releases all types of repressions when he squeezes the trigger at some unsuspecting target. Then there is the additional thought that sportsmen are really not sure of their manliness (women huntresses excluded) and thus feel obligated to go on their hunting sprees in order to prove something to themselves.

If this sounds confusing, I could not agree with you more. It seems to imply there are a frighteningly large number

of people walking around on this planet not sure who they are, and I would like to make a few observations on these psychologists' observations. Obviously, they have never stalked anything outside of new clients. I cannot help but feel they realize the limitations of their own smug little world. They dwell and probe in other people's lives and much as the pressure cooker lets off steam, they justify their own unhappiness and inadequacies by criticizing others. I am only challenging those few poor lost souls who need their couch worse than their patients, certainly not the majority of doctors in the much needed and valuable fields of psychology and psychiatry. It further heartens me to know that a large number of gentlemen in the psychiatric - medical profession are annual purchasers of hunting licenses.

Since this is a sportsman's diary and not a medical journal, I will not dwell much further on this subject. However, I do feel obligated to express briefly what some of us "chickens feel when let out of the old barnyard." To me, anyway, pleasure from hunting comes from a fair challenge of the game and the elements alike. I, personally, receive no enjoyment out of blasting a sow bear with her cub or doe deer with her faun. A satisfying hunt must have an intelligent purpose. When I have shot a buck deer, it is because venison was required as sustenance at camp as well as enjoyed on my dining table at home. The same rule applies to antelope, elk, moose, waterfowl, etc., that have found their way into my deep freeze. When hunting lion, gazelle, and the Cape buffalo in Africa or the jaguar and anaconda in South America, I have kept the heads for trophies, and many of the skins have been used for the same purpose as those that made the good doctors' wallets and covered their couches.

But the supreme satisfaction in hunting lies in the in-

tangibles — for instance, the companionship of hunting, the closeness between sportsmen and guides on a hunt. This is one of the few situations left in our society today where the success requirement of a partner does not depend on his bank account, the number of college degrees he has, or the country clubs he belongs to. He is either a good Joe or not and what is inside the man determines how pleasant a companion he makes.

Another intangible is the time a man has to think. Sounds strange? Most of us are on the damndest time schedule, whether we realize it or not. Our lives are dominated by the clock and we never seem to accomplish all the things we feel we must in the allotted time, and yet this same time table makes us creatures of habit. We struggle with our daily routine and never seem to find time to spend a few hours with people we enjoy or even with ourselves. The day of interesting conversation among friends or the reading of good books seems to be passing. I will not be so presumptuous as to say this is a charming way of life that has been replaced by modern electrical screen devices, for then the blame lies unjustly not with ourselves. You see, hunters do have a chance to talk by campfires and to read the book that accumulated dust on the shelf. They have a chance to count the stars the same way as they did when they were kids — and the same with rainbows, sunrises, and sunsets.

Regardless of what ogres we are made out to be, we hunters do not shoot everything that moves. Perhaps a few do, but sportsmen call this breed butchers. We enjoy watching game in their natural habitat, for true beauty is in life, not death. We think we learn as much understanding of life from Mother Nature as we could from paying a thousand dollar bill for psychiatric services.

I will get off my soapbox with a final wish that sportsmen should not practice psychiatry without attending medical school, and I likewise suggest that the fortunately few psychiatrists who criticize sportsmen should not expound on the subject until they leave the confines of sidewalk cement, expose themselves to fresh oxygen, and at least learn to recognize poison ivy.

Anyway, as I started to say before I became the self-appointed defense attorney for "Hunters, Inc.," today was devoted to checking equipment and practicing our marksmanship on the firing line.

Evening came soon enough, but not so sleep. It was too exciting a thought to know that tomorrow we would begin scouting the Arctic Ice Pack and see what type of animals were roaming this massive expanse of wilderness. As I lay back in my sleeping bag, I was mentally wrestling a polar bear and out-swimming a seal. It was only after some tossing that I had a most welcome visitor, Morpheus.

April 8

Della Mae thinks that I have the funniest nose she has ever seen. The more she pulls it, the more my eyes water, and what is more fun than to wake up the strange man by taking a firm grip and watching him turn purple? I laughed and tried to think how I could sneak in a solar plexus punch to the kid. Della Mae read my thoughts and retired near concerned witnesses.

Marshall had more compassion for me. His only threatening move was sticking out his tongue a few times. Besides, he was more interested in Arthur's pipes. They really were not good pipes according to Marshall's set of values. When he put them in the soapy water, they did not even blow bubbles.

Arthur blew bubbles, though; when he foamed at the mouth, I intercepted just in time.

"It is one big joke, Art, ha, ha. My nose and your pipes, ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur bared his teeth, regarded Marshall with a vampirish look, and retrieved his possessions. But Helmericks came stomping into the cabin with a cheerie hello for all. He had brought his appetite and wet snow. Nanny gave him "the word" in Eskimo, and I knew now there are some Eskimo phrases that are part of the universal language.

Nanny and Lydia dished out breakfast: oatmeal, bread, and tea. I may talk a lot, but my mouth is not big enough to swallow those lumps. Arthur was hiding his oatmeal under a napkin when the whole tribe proceeded to give him a lecture on how oatmeal is healthy and why he must have a hearty breakfast in order to hunt in the Arctic.

Arthur kept mumbling and pointed at me accusingly, "Why me? Why not him?"

Bud answered that question. It seems Bud was going to split Art and me up in order that we would have better hunting. Art and Opiak would leave today by sled dog for the Arctic Ice Pack. I would stay at the base camp and hunt by plane with Bud. Then later we would switch around. Apparently Bud did not successfully answer Art's question, for my compadre was still mumbling, "Why me?" after Bud announced the assignments.

Arthur was suspicious of me for the remainder of the morning, particularly when Bud and I got into an hilarious conversation. I was never quite able to convince him that I knew nothing about our guide's intentions. To put a clincher on our friendship, I even offered to go out on the Ice Pack in-

stead. Arthur's eyes lit up and he was giving serious thought to an acceptance speech when I added my feet hurt, a cough had gotten to my chest, and did he have anything for a splitting headache? I cannot say positively I detected a tear, but Arthur wiped something away from his eye. He knew when he was beaten; so he solemnly began to pack his gear together. I offered to help, but each time I approached his cot, he sneered at me.

Loading a dog sled is no easy task. Monstrous problems present themselves even before the packing: what to take, what to leave behind because of weight problems, the equipment required for the kind of terrain to be traveled. Actually, a dog sled on an Arctic hunt is a traveling camp. Hunters must be prepared for all emergencies: storms, food shortage, cold survival, and so on. This takes equipment such as shovel, pick, hatchet, ropes, tent poles and stakes, tents, first-aid kit, fuel, additional dog harness and repair kit, extra sled runners, flashlights, weapons and ammunition, cooking utensils, extra clothing and food supplies.

All of these things, along with the actual weight of the sled make it impossible to traverse thin-surfaced areas. Furthermore, while rough ice fields are comparatively safe, a man can easily acquire back strain heaving and hauling the burdened sled over thirty-foot rises. That is why areas must be scouted constantly by binoculars in order to avoid impassable routes.

Dog sled hunting relies on Lady Luck, as far as personal food provisions are concerned. It would be impractical to attempt to carry several months of provisions — that is how long hunters could be out if they ran into one storm after another. A ten truck convoy would not even be adequate.

What do you do then? Carry minimum bulk, highly concentrated food, figure that you are going to lose weight, and ask Lady Luck to smile favorably on your hunting endeavors. Men have lived or died, their sled dogs included, all depending on whether they came across that herd of caribou in the snow fog or found the seals sunning on the ice the day the huskies' food was used up, — or the barren sow bear walked right into camp after weeks of unsuccessful tracking. How can I fully explain it? At best, it is not easy.

Enough of this seriousness or this may be the shortest diary on record. Planes leave Point Barrow for the States three times a week.

The boys were late getting started. Opiak is Mr. Slow Motion whatever the occasion may be, and I had the hunch that Arthur was bit reluctant to bid goodbye to base camp. Not that he was not looking forward to hunting the Ice Pack, but why give the order to abandon ship?

We said goodby numerous times. There were additional last-minute bits of advice, thumping on the back, hearty embraces with the women folk. Bud wisely put an ending to the Aloha proceedings when he saw the huskies sound asleep in their harnesses. He gave Opiak his "get down to business" look. Opiak jumped on the sled's runners and gave a blood-curdling scream. The dogs leapt up, Art nearly fell off the sled, and I thought that Arctic living had finally snapped Opiak's mind. Arthur had little time for the farewell speech he had envisioned orating to us. I ran like hell to keep up with the sled. I wanted to say a few nice last words with my com-padre. We parted friends. Who else did we have in this forsaken place?

Camp settled down. Bud thought it a good idea to take

the Arctic Tern for a brief flight and cruise the area the boys were headed for. At the same time I could get used to the Arctic Tern, having flown some myself. It is always a better feeling when a pilot can turn to his passenger and say, "Take over." The passenger, in particular, prefers to have some flight experience when such an occasion arises.

Bud and I went to the little cabin next to the main house. Here is where Bud stays. The cabin consisted of a bed, table, chair, and stove. When Helmericks' six feet, three inches and two hundred pounds squeezed through the door, I found myself on the outside looking in. Bud handed out his sleeping gear, emergency supplies, and a can of engine oil that had been heating on the stove. While Bud carried his gear to the plane, I collected mine next door.

The heated oil is vital to an engine's performance. It is so cold up here that an engine could never turn over without the oil's warmth. I chopped the tie-down stakes out of the ice and untied the plane. This is another necessary precaution in the Arctic. You never know when a storm will arrive unannounced. The velocity of these winds could effortlessly flip a plane off the runway; therefore, anything remaining outside must be lashed securely.

The Arctic Tern has a personality all her own. If she was a thoroughbred Bud's little plane would be a Kentucky Derby winner. We took her through a series of dives, roll-overs, and glides, and later practiced landings and take-offs. It takes a while to get used to the ski landing gear.

We landed in time to referee a sled race between Della Mae and Marshall. Each had a miniature sled pulled by a team of Husky puppies. There was one trouble though. No puppy volunteered to be the lead dog; thus four balls of

fur per sled had varied ideas where the finish line was, and Della Mae and Marshall could not have cared less. They were too busy hanging on to their ski-equipped chariots.

After supper, Bud and I went over the Arctic slope aerial map and talked about the various areas we would search for bear and seal. Even looking at the map gives one a feeling of the enormousness of this wilderness. Another odd feeling comes from the habit Bud's index finger has of pointing to uncharted areas on the map. What did he think I wanted to do, have a certain type of seal named after me?

As I lie here on my cot tonight, I wonder where Art and Opiak are. I kind of miss the smiling Irishman. Let's hope we both have good hunting.

April 9

Today was the kind of day all hunters must expect. Long hours, hard work, no results. Bud Helmericks and I flew seven hundred miles today in our single engine 170 Cessna. Seven hundred miles over tremendous fields of crushed ice, seven hundred miles of picking out polar bear tracks, only to lose them when the bear crossed over slick fields of ice, leaving no prints.

The weather has turned extremely warm for this part of the world, ten degrees above zero. We have been fortunate these past two days as weather has favored us, although Lady Luck has somewhat ignored us in our search for trophy bear. However, this is simply a spoiled remark from a most anxious hunter.

What we really want is a gentle snow, enough to cover the ice so that tracking will become easier. As it stands now, tracks three weeks old look the same as those pressed in hard snow just two days ago.

We saw three bears today. Polar bears are not white or we would have never seen any on the great Arctic Ice Pack. Their yellowish coats reflect the sun's golden rays and if the trained eye is alert enough, *sometimes* it can pick out bears resting in between giant blocks of ice or lying motionless against a snow bank. The three bears we were able to discern were a huge sow bear and her cub, and a lone sow. The sow bear's cub was about two years old, which meant that to kill the mother would automatically seal the cub's death warrant. Polar bear cubs are dependent on their mothers longer than any other animal I know. Even a three-year-old cub remains with the sow bear for fear of starving. A polar bear's only sustenance is seal, and it takes a long time for a cub to be strong enough and clever enough to outsmart his flippered meal ticket. Other young animals, including the cubs of other species of bears, when abandoned by their parents can usually exist because of plentiful fish, game, and vegetation. However, matching wits with the ever-alert seal as your only source of food is quite another thing.

How, then, do polar bears ever put away a square meal, competing against so clever an adversary? Fortunately for the polar bear, the seal must breath air and unfortunately for the seal, the polar bear has the patience of Job. The bear roams the Ice Pack, waiting for the supreme moment when a seal sticks his snort out of an airhole he has pushed through the ice. Then with the speed of a mongoose the bear will swing his mighty paw in a scooping movement and impale the seal on razor-sharp claws.

Incidentally, do not get the idea that polar bears are slow travelers. They can lope along at twenty-five miles an hour in high gear — and they cover one hundred miles or more in a day's casual wandering. Speaking about polar

bears, they are not the smartest animals in the world as far as self-preservation is concerned. Eskimo hunters have caught many bears by dragging seal blubber back into their camp. Since few polar bears have been personally introduced to either human beings or sled dogs, they do not understand why Eskimo camps applaud their entrance with drooling chops. Some Eskimos, known for their laziness and lack of sportsmanship, have laid seal blubber oil leading directly to the cooking tent and the last report of such an outrageous distortion of the Queensbury Rules was that white fur was flying outside the Eskimo hut.

In all seriousness, it is too early in the hunt for me to report accurately about the courage of the polar bear. I have listened to many conflicting stories, all with a suspicious flavor of exaggeration. Perhaps by Easter week I will have more of an answer on this subject. Right now I can accurately report that I am scared as hell of the polar bear, and unless this blond carnivorous mammoth approaches me with an outstretched paw (just one) and smoking the peace pipe, I am not about to change my convictions.

Bud Helmericks and I landed our plane as an evening thaw fog set down upon camp. Nanny had caribou meatballs waiting for us, a recipe the "21" restaurant of New York could be proud to serve. It does help if you are ravenous, though.

We were sitting around after supper, checking equipment and generally relaxing. Lydia was batting her pretty eye-lashes at Joe while strumming an original concerto on her guitar. I suspect that all is not a brotherly-sisterly feeling between these two. I suspect George suspects this also, the way he never lets Joe out of his sight. Nanny acts unconcerned

over the budding love, no doubt figuring an extra permanent member of the wood-chopping detail would make life easier for her.

Della Mae and Marshall rounded out the family group. Della Mae was not her usual boisterous self. Marshall had stuffed six pieces of bubble gum in her mouth. Every time she protested, another wad disappeared in the tooth-rimmed bullseye. Marshall was quiet for obvious reasons. So far, I had been the sole witness to his carryings-on with his sister, since both were under the bed. Fearing for Della Mae's respiratory powers, I crawled under the cot and relieved the little girl of her burden. I received a determined set of clamped teeth on my thumb for my Boy Scout effort. Marshall bit me on the other hand for playing hero. I let out a yelp and made a strategic retreat back to my cot. Nanny beamed, "Holmes nice fella. He play with children."

Then something occurred to mar a perfect day. However, it impressed upon me a lesson not soon to be forgotten. Joe complained of a bad headache. I thought nothing about it, assuming Lydia's guitar playing was the likely cause. Then I was ashamed of my facetious thoughts. Joe was truly in pain. His eyes were watering and his facial skin had noticeably turned red. George Woods knew in one glance what was wrong with the boy. He called me over.

"Joe stupid. He no wear sunglasses today. No put medicine on face. This what happens."

Nanny had called Bud to the rescue. Bud carefully bathed Joe's eyes with boric acid and placed soaked cotton pads over them. The medicine George Woods referred to was sun tan lotion. Bud covered Joe's face with cooling cream.

I promised Bud that I would heed this lesson.

"I hope so," he replied. "You wouldn't be the first man to go blind and suffer first degree burns in these parts." He left me with that thought.

April 10

This morning I awoke with six smiling faces looking down at my sleep-drugged face. The twelve eyes had a satan twinkle; so I assumed that camp had a surprise for me. Everyone patiently waited as I staggered out of my sleeping bag and groped toward a refreshing bowl of steaming ice water. One wakes up quickly in Polar Bear camp. Simply remember two rules: keep talking or singing, so your teeth will not chatter too hard; and keep moving while piling on the clothes, so the body does not stiffen. Once the clothes are on and the body has taken the icy plunge into the wash tub, you are ready for breakfast and the Blue Cross Plan.

Breakfast this morning was the subject of my Eskimo friends' amusement. Today was the supreme menu. Lydia gave her juvenile shriek and produced a seal flipper boiled to a medium rare and a caribou tongue boiled until it gave up the fight. To be perfectly unbiased, I accepted the tongue and frozen bread with reservations, but seal flipper is quite another thing. One does not taste this and roll over in ecstasy. True, one might roll over, but for quite a different reason. Seal flipper is an acquired taste, taking, let us say, about forty to fifty years to develop. So forget this recipe — unless six anxious faces are examining every line in your face for reaction, and then remember your book of Arctic rules. Never waste any food put in front of you and Eskimo courtesy requires the guests to do small raves over the cuisine.

Breakfast was through and so was I. Bud Helmericks

gallantly rescued me and pointed my stomach toward the landing strip. I rather hurried to our plane for fear Nanny would find my portion of the seal flipper in the trash can, though even a Pinkerton man could not have perceived it being sneaked out in a napkin. Bud warmed up the ski plane and off we went toward the Ice Pack.

Our first responsibility was to find Arthur and Opiak. We felt certain that we would spot dog sled tracks within the hour. How wrong we were. The warm weather had caused a heavy snow on the Arctic Prairie, and apparently a cold front falling inland where our camp was. We flew a twenty-mile square pattern without success. With no clue where they might be and figuring they had camped in between gigantic mounds of ice for shelter, we knew all we would be doing was to waste gas and endanger lives unnecessarily. The air currents were vicious, and flying low over fields of broken ice jutting several hundred feet in the air just does not make sense.

We turned our Cessna due north and searched all day for polar bear or anything else for that matter. Tracking at four hundred feet from a plane in turbulent air is extremely tiring. Our gallant little ship was battling thirty-five-mile-per-hour winds, while we were battling eyestrain and boredom. As our emptying gas tanks were about to send us home to camp, one of my sleepy eyes spied two yellow blurs wedged in between an ice formation. Bud eased the plane down for a closer look and there were two polar bears having a grand old time playing tug-of-war with a very sick seal. Neither Bud nor I could be certain of the size of the beasts from the air and their tracks were too crumbly in the soft snow to provide accurate information.

Bud motioned to a clearing in the ice field several miles

away and gave me a questioning look. I did not feel like playing sled dog for two miles across broken ice, but I also did not want to bypass a trophy bear. These were the first two adult bears we had seen together and the chance of one being a male was excellent.

When in doubt, I ignore the situation; so I ignored Bud. Bud ignored me and landed on the ice clearing, which proved roughly the size of a postage stamp. There is no doubt that Helmericks is a great pilot or this morning's caribou tongue would have been the last supper. There is no doubt that I am a fatalist, for I have every intention of flying with Bud tomorrow.

I would not say that I am exactly out of condition, but fifty yards toward the quarry (with 3,470 yards to go) I was panting like a labrador retriever discovering a duck farm. Half-way to the bears, I wished I had never spotted the damn things. Then the numbness set in. I kept mumbling something about "Idiots who leave hot stoves" and "Why don't they sell bear whistles?"

Then I became clever. Why was I plunging through the snow when I could follow Bud's footprints? Crackerjack idea! Let Helmericks do the path breaking and I would trot on right behind him. Resignedly, I stared down at the snow and followed his prints. It was quite a marathon. Icicles were dangling from my eyelashes and a newly-arrived wind was composing a sonata in my eardrums.

After playing Follow the Leader for some time, I noticed I was leaping rather than stepping. Bud sure had a long stride. The then strangest thought occurred to me. Bud must have taken off his boots and socks — because wasn't I looking at toe and heel marks? And what was Bud doing growling

up ahead instead of talking to me like a civilized human being?

What occurred next is hazy. I looked up from the corner of my eye, I saw Bud Helmericks waving up a storm from an ice peak several hundred feet to my right. To my left was nothing but ice. Directly ahead were two startled polar bears, somewhat annoyed that their seal barbecue was interrupted. I wish I could report that the bears snarled and charged while I took trusty aim with my rifle and converted the beasts into fireplace rugs. The way it happened was that dinner was practically over for the bears, they did not like my face, and they suddenly remembered a previous engagement five hundred miles away. Polar bears can run faster than I imagined, for all I got in my rifle scope were chunks of non-fur-bearing ice. Helmericks was busy with the motion picture camera, but unfortunately, the finished product will have to resemble the San Francisco Earthquake, he was laughing so hard.

We returned to camp in a rather strained silence. My strength, patience, and sense of humor had reached a new alltime low. Polar bears were not my favorite topic of conversation. However, I did ask my guide if all polar bears ran away like this. Bud gave me his professional solemn look and said, "I have seen them run just as fast in the other direction."

Well, sir, that settled that. Any resemblance between a squaw and her papoose and Bud and myself was going to be purely intentional.

Joe's condition is greatly improved today. George insisted he stay inside and keep applying the boric acid compresses. I understand from Nanny that Della Mae and Marshall have been angels, knowing Joe is on the sick list. Peace

and quiet prevail as the two children sit quietly in a corner, not murmuring a sound.

Bud mused, "I wonder what the little tikes are thinking about." I knew damn well what they were thinking. "Why doesn't Joe get well so we can bite the funny man's hand again? Personally, I wish they would make some noise, then I would know where they are every second of the time.

Nanny's meat pie gave me a new lease on life, and surprisingly enough, I finished the evening enthusiastically planning tomorrow's hunt with Bud. He still had that twinkle in his eye, damn it. And the way the sled dogs are howling outside, some big mouth passed the story on to our canine population.

April 11

Last night rudely reminded me that I was no longer in Beverly Hills, California. The winds tattooed a strange rhythm and came up with an impressive score: two windows broken and a door half-way ripped off. What truly kept me awake was visions of Art Crowley grabbing hold of flying tent-lines on the Arctic Ocean's edge.

Tremendous drifts were all around the house this morning so we shoveled our way out. Miraculously, our valiant little skybird, the Cessna, was still in one piece, although the plane's tie-downs had a workout.

For the past four days we have been expecting Wien Airlines to send its DC3 plane to our camp and deliver badly needed kerosene for our stoves and, equally important, gas drums for our plane. We can only fly several more days with the gasoline at hand. It gives one a strange and rather helpless feeling to be so dependent on others in matters such as



Home is where you find it in the Arctic. Crowley and Holmes thought this lean-to a palace after living in tents and combating 40 m.p.h. winds and subzero temperatures.



The author wears a white sheet parka, excellent for stalking seal and polar bear.

this. There is always the other possibility of flying in to Point Barrow each day, some three hundred and fifty miles away, and filling up as many five-gallon gas cans as we could carry in the plane. This is a tedious process and limits hunting time and area.

Breakfast today was sensible cornflakes, tea, and bread still well chilled. You will notice I do not dwell on luncheon menus because there just "ain't no such animal" when Arctic hunting, except for an occasional candy bar for energy with a swallow of snow as a chaser.

We noticed from past days that the bears seem to be moving along the Ice Pack in late afternoon; so I spent the morning and early afternoon recuperating from yesterday's marathon and checking my hunting equipment thoroughly. Hunting in the Arctic has one advantage. Although you must keep your rifle bore clean, there is no problem about oiling your weapon's parts. Just the opposite! Because of extremely cold temperatures, it is wise to keep your rifle bone dry for fear a lubricant would freeze and hamper the working action.

The semi-miracles occurred this afternoon. Wien Airlines flew in our fuel drums and the overcast weather turned to clear sky. When Arctic weather gives the hunter a break, no time is wasted before loading the plane with supplies, tents, hunting equipment, and emergency gasoline. We flew directly toward "the lead" or, less technically, the specific area where the solid field of ice covering the Arctic Ocean breaks off and meets the blue water. Along the Arctic Ice Pack Lead is where Eskimo natives have found the best bear hunting to be. Polar bears must catch seals to exist and these flippered Arctic residents tend to swim up and down the water's edge, occasionally flopping up on the ice for a siesta. However, I do not wish to

mislead you. One is likely to find seal anywhere that the ocean ice is thin enough for seals to break air holes for breathing. A perfect example of this happened this afternoon after several hours flying around in search of Art and Opiak. But before I relate this experience, do not think we had entirely forgotten the boys.

I find it difficult to relate my emotions concerning our unsuccessful attempts to locate Art and Opiak. Guilt, frustration, disappointment, fear — you name it, I had it. Bud maintained a calmer exterior than yours truly, yet I knew he was beginning to have worry pains too. However, his explanation did have a degree of comforting logic. Actually, it is foolish to attempt a time schedule in the Arctic Circle because of many unforeseen circumstances, such as snow, fog, heavy drifts, a fissure in the ice causing many extra hours and even days of delay, lameness of the sled dogs, or breakdown of the sled, and so on. Bud also had the happy thought that the boys spotted a giant bear and had changed their original course of travel to track the animal. Often this has slowed up the hunter for days if the terrain is difficult and the wind unfavorable for rapid approach. Apparently not enough time had elapsed to push the panic button, so we continued to keep one eye peeled for the boys and the other for Nanook, the polar bear.

We flew for several hours over the Ice Pack until the weather began to show its usual fickleness. The day was becoming more overcast by the minute. Bud thought it wise to head inland. He slightly altered his course toward our main camp in the hope of picking up dog sled tracks as we skimmed along one hundred and fifty feet above the ice floe.

Bud broke the monotonous search when he excitedly

pointed toward a field of broken ice. I looked and saw nothing, which was par for the course. Then Bud whacked me on the head with "There it is!"

Now I really took the one hundred dollar look. Two things simultaneously occurred to me. Either I had snow blindness or Arctic madness had claimed me. People have been known to lose their minds in this part of the world, but it usually takes years instead of days. One more look — no dogs, no sled, no Crowley, no Opiak, no bears, one chunk of dirty ice. Now I was emotionally ready to accept the butterfly net and leather straps.

Bud dove the ship toward the tiny chunk of dirty ice and same ice moved while sprouting flippers.

"Seal," chuckled Bud. "Let's land and see how well you can stalk."

Don't get the idea that when Helmericks lands, he taxis the ship right up to the animal. Bud first checks the wind and then looks for a possible clearing far enough down wind so as not to scare the animal. Somehow, with my luck, the only plausible landing patch invariably lies smack between fields of broken ice twenty-five feet high and several unnecessary miles away.

Mountain goats are the most daring, courageous, stupendous, intelligent, sure-footed, alert animals in the world. I say this because I fancied myself a mountain goat as I huffed, puffed, and slid over this miserable type of frozen real estate.

Our big bull seal was lying down on a stretch of smooth ice. With the aid of binoculars, we could see him resting by the small round hole he had broken through the ice. When seals rest on ice, they are seldom more than inches away from

their air hole and the water's safety. Give them the slightest cause for alarm and, with a roll of the flipper, they are ocean bound. Perhaps this will illustrate why Arctic hunters know they have one shot per seal. These sleek little mammals do not stay around for an encore.

Bud and I put on white sheet parkas in order to blend with the snow. Then came the tedious creeping stage of our stalk. Squirming over the ice, loaded down with thirty pounds of clothing and weapons, is not the most casual form of exercise in the world. What seemed miles and was hours later, we inched our way toward a chunk of ice one hundred and fifty yards from the sleeping bull seal. "Resting" is a more accurate term because seals only sleep twenty seconds or so at a time. Then they rear up, look around for polar bear or clumsy oafs like myself. Once satisfied there is no danger, they return to their twenty-second nap: To add to the frustration of seal stalking, one soon finds out that not all seals have the same resting habits. There are the sneaky ones who vary their dozing time. You can watch them in the glasses for fifteen minutes until you are absolutely satisfied their sleeping habits are uniform: nineteen seconds asleep, ten seconds awake. Then, just as you are moving towards the seal during your nineteen seconds of grace, brother seal takes a very dim view of your antics with a very awake eye. He leaves you with a flipper's bronx cheer and the frustrating question, "What made him change his siesta routine?"

We were rapidly drawing close to our seal when Bud whispered in my ear to act like a seal in case the beast spied our approach. I had grown accustomed to my guide's off-hand remarks, but I was not prepared for this. Act like a seal? Impossible! I had not even been formally introduced to one.

Apparently power of suggestion did the trick as I waddled closer to the seal. I kept on repeating to myself, "I am a seal, I look like a seal, I look like a seal, I act like a seal. Helmericks looks like a seal (at some angles more than others)." As Bud suspected, our flippered friend had a bad dream and caught me squirming over the ice. I stopped my ridiculous motion and rolled over on my side exactly as I have seen his city cousins do in the circus. The seal bobbed his head around for a good minute and snorted out a few endearing barks. I played coy and did not answer. That is all I needed, a seal playfully nipping on my earlobe. Helmericks was choking with laughter and apparently his uncivilized sounds satisfied the seal that I was playing hard to get. Either our bull seal was too old and tired to play Ring-a-leiree-o or he was vain as hell. Anyway, he went back to sleep.

I sighted the rifle's scope on the seal. He was lying directly horizontally towards me; and carefully, ever so carefully, I jerked the trigger. You are way ahead of me. Naturally, I missed. Any fool would who does not squeeze off his shot. However, I did crease his toupee, as verified later by stray seal hair scattered around his emergency exit. So if Lloyds of London have a new policy holder tonight, it is my seal.

My only shot was a brain kill, my target being the size of a lime at one hundred and fifty yards. I say all this to make me feel better when I know I really should be able to accomplish this shot easily or confine my hunting endeavors to shooting galleries. When we returned to camp, Bud grimly led me to the rifle range, where, after seventy-five rounds, my rifle and I once again became friends.

My mind was working overtime, scheming how I could

make a graceful exit from the rifle range and Nanny's sympathetic clucking. Then I spied Joe wandering toward us to see what all the shooting was about. I had found my mullet.

"Over here, Joe," I screamed. "Want to shoot my rifle?"

Joe had never shot any rifle caliber heavier than a 22. I had baited the lamb for the altar. Helmericks was trapped in my neat, uncompromising strategy. He could not very well play the "heavy" and interfere with my brotherly-love gesture. Nor could he insult Joe by not permitting him the opportunity of firing my cannon. But Daniel Boone was not fooled by my shenanigans for a minute.

Ceremoniously, I handed Joe my rifle, even smoothing away a mound of snow where I had fired in a prone position. I neglected to relate that this snow was caused by my elbow smashing into the ice each time I fired. Joe listened to Bud's directions intently. I walked off, my conscience driving me away from the battlefield.

I was gazing in an opposite direction when I heard the rifle's sharp report and the inevitable moan which followed it. Joe was on his feet, looking around like a madman — only he thought the shoe fitted elsewhere.

"You guys crazy," he shouted. "Fella get hurt with this damn thing."

He rubbed his shoulder all the way back to the cabin. I followed closely, yelling back to Helmericks:

"You know, Bud — he is right."

Joe kept his eyes averted throughout supper. I appealed to his charitableness and attempted to include him in on my sparkling table conversation. He was not going to pet the dog that bit him. I found I was talking to myself. Joe's attitude was contagious. Della Mae's suspicious eyes and Marshall's

"mad squint" gave me a small idea that their hero had appealed for Eskimo unity.

Tonight I know I am going to dream of a big bull seal sneering at me, showing me the rude end of his flippers. Well, as they say, that's the way the seal bounces.

April 12

April twelfth will not go down as a smashing success in my hunting memories. The sun did not grace us with its presence, but every fog bank in the territory attended the annual convention along the Ice Pack. Flying was out of the question; therefore, no hunting. When a sportsman has not yet bagged his number one trophy, in my case polar bear, every moment not spent in hot pursuit is a moment of disappointment and sheer waste. Now, being frustrated in polar bear camp is quite unlike frustrations I have experienced before, such as not having my steak charred medium rare, finding no olive in a martini, attempting the sale of literary efforts to publishers, and so on. In camp everyone is involved with his everyday way of life and could not care less whether you watch fish nets being mended, animal skins being stretched and dried, or the younger dogs being trained to pull a sled properly.

George Woods, my Eskimo host, is a very wise old man indeed. He must have guessed how I felt, after seeing me wandering around snow banks talking to myself. He set me to work helping him stretch and needle together the caribou hides his wife, Nanny, would eventually convert to warm parkas and snow boots. Three hours of this new form of "recreation" and I was ready for the snow drifts again.

Once in a while, like, say every five minutes, I would

look hopefully to the sky and receive the same answer. Operation Nanook had come to a screeching halt.

The one bright spot in the day was that we knew Art and Opiak should be camped by the Ice Pack Lead by now. One advantage the hunter with the dog sled has is that overcast weather does not cut down his hunting time. Actually, polar bears seem to roam the Ice Pack more frequently in dismal days and even stormy ones.

We plan to make contact with the boys tomorrow or Sunday, weather permitting. April thirteenth is Arthur Crowley's birthday and the feminine contingent in camp have been busy interpreting a recipe for a birthday cake. I realized Arthur would like numerous other things, but where in the hell could I get them?

I had sneaked off to my sleeping bag for the afternoon when Helmericks showed his happy face and re-hashed the antagonizing details of my missing yesterday's seal. I listened to the entire lecture, wincing at such remarks as, "An inch is as good as a mile," "Only incompetent idiots jerk the trigger," and "Act and think like the animal you are stalking." All I can say is that it went on and on and I was thinking that Helmericks must have been either an elephant or Napoleon Bonaparte in a former life.

We then trotted down to Torture Alley. I christened the rifle range with this endearing term, for this was the place where we acquired the ringing in the ears from muzzle blast, the headaches from the ringing, and the black and blue shoulder from the rifle's recoil.

It took precisely eleven rounds to convince Helmericks that I was shooting straight and to convince me that my twelfth round would be aimed at Helmericks. I spent the

rest of the day writing my notes left-handed, my right hand twitching in sympathy for its shoulder.

George Woods and Bud dropped in and my work was interrupted by a most fascinating reminiscence of Arctic wildlife adventures. George was in the process of stretching a caribou hide, and I imagine that is how we got on the subject of this predominant Arctic resident.

For days now I have seen these splendid animals scattered in small herds over the entire Arctic snow-covered prairie. Their dreaded enemies are lobo, the wolf, and man. Fortunately, fish and game authorities with foresight have aided the caribou to exist by placing seasonal and numerical restrictions on the hunting of caribou by Eskimo and white man alike. As yet, no emissary from the Arctic wolf council has pledged his support to these laws. The caribou is actually the main source of food and clothing for men and women living in this part of the world, and should the caribou herds face extinction because of thoughtless slaughter, who knows how many Eskimo families would starve to death? Our memories are not so short that we forget the almost tragic ending of the North American buffalo and the disastrous effect it had on the Indians.

George Woods was telling me of the strange way of life that exists between the caribou and the wolves. These treacherous, vicious creatures also rely on caribou as their main source of sustenance, while moose is their second choice. If you wish to hunt wolf, follow the caribou herds and eventually you will find a pack. These wolf packs generally are one family, numbering anywhere from three to twelve wolves. Occasionally they run in larger numbers by combining forces; yet this is the exception. The most amazing thing

to observe about the caribou's and wolf's relationship is that wolves wander freely around the fringes of a caribou herd and the caribou do not seem to mind one bit. I hasten to add this is only when the wolves' bellies are filled. The caribou have a sixth sense and know they are not in danger, as do the antelope and zebra herds in Africa when a well-fed pride of lions roam nearby. But hunger and the wolves' killer instinct take over after a short while. The caribou herd bunch together, the bulls acting as a rear guard and sentinel. The wolves are not nearly as afraid of the large males as they are of the female cows guarding their calves. Although the pack will try to bring down a stray calf as an easy meal ticket, they usually must resort to a more strategic attack. The wolves know that once the herd is divided, their task is an easy one. They dart in and out to create confusion and barely stay out of reach of the caribou's sharp antlers and hooves, as the case may be. An older crippled bull or a cow remaining by her calf's side find themselves separated from their companions, the wolves make their move, and their victim or victims are surrounded. The wolf attacks much as the American Indian did when he was after wagon-train settlers — around and around, darting in and out, until defense is an impossibility. The pitiful result is obvious. To point out the inborn viciousness of the wolf still further, it is not uncommon to come upon a large number of caribou slaughtered by wolves at one time. Yet the only part of the body eaten is the tongue. A delicacy yes, but the result is truly wanton killing.

Distasteful as this subject is, there remains another story about lobo and his crafty mind. The moose, more formidable a foe because of his great size and massive antlers,

receives his share of trouble from lobo. However, in this case, the wolf picks his spot more carefully. He has seen his brothers impaled on the sword-point antlers and their skulls crushed by the moose's powerful kick. To find a moose helpless is the ideal situation a wolf seeks out. A wolf pack will keep a moose herd under observance for weeks until there is a heavy snow. Then, should a quick freeze follow, the wolves have practically a sure thing for their main dinner course. It works this way. The moose is seriously hampered by heavy snow while running from his adversaries. As he flounders for his escape, the pursuing wolf pack takes advantage of their proportional light weight and safely travels on top of the hard outer crust of snow caused by the freeze. Here again, the result needs no explanation.

Now for the big question. We all know Nature has a law of balance. Where does the wolf get his come-uppance? Man, disease, and starvation play the major roles in preventing the Arctic wolf from getting numerically out of hand. The Federal government pays a fifty-dollar bounty for each wolf destroyed. Present the right hind foot and the green-backs are yours.

Bud tells me that Art and I will have our chance hunting these much despised animals later on; so perhaps a following entry will have a first hand account of this phase of our Arctic adventure.

Later this afternoon the camp had a visitor. The Reverend Bill Wartes dropped in with his Cessna plane for a brief hello. He had not seen the Woods family for some time, and being the kind of man he is, weather does not stop him. Nanny and George Woods are simple, devout Christians and have raised their family accordingly. When Bill Wartes

walked in with the Bible in one hand, hymn book in the other, the sun was shining again as far as this Eskimo family was concerned. Bill did a little "Arctic preaching" and I might add that no words I have heard from a pulpit meant more to me than his sermon. We sang a few hymns. Lydia supplying the accompaniment. Then Bill Wartes took off in his plane to make other people feel as gloriously at peace with the world as we did.

The final thing I did this evening was to look at a breaking sky. Prayers are answered. We can attempt to reach Art tomorrow for his birthday.

No doubt Nanook will hog my dreams tonight, but I believe I will go to sleep thinking about what the Reverend Bill Wartes said.

April 13

It snowed last night, only an inch, but nevertheless it snowed. All of us in camp have been praying we would get this type of weather. So far, all the bear we have spotted can be attributed to Lady Luck and not our prowess as vigilant hunters. Tracking bear in hard-crusted snow and bare ice simply cannot be done — or if attempted, one should have a psychiatrist close at hand. Bud Helmericks and I already have flown several thousand miles following tracks. We eventually lose them on smooth ice or see them swallowed up by snow drifts. Following any kind of track from a plane in flight is a trick in itself. Now I know how the old circus barnstorming aviator felt.

My first attempts at tracking went something like this. Bud would skim the plane several hundred feet above the crumbled ice fields, maintaining a ground speed well over

one hundred miles per hour. Eventually he would spot tracks. Rather, let us say, "I believe" he found tracks. That is what he would claim anyway. Helmericks would point to more blurred snow and then ask me:

"How big a bear do you guess him to be, Bill?"

I would then stare at the ground for what I thought an appropriately intelligent time and reply:

"Looks to be a large one, Bud. Maybe nine hundred pounds, give or take fifty."

Bud dips the Cessna's wing, peers more closely, and remarks:

"Wonder where he picked up the cubs?"

Now I know another secret. Unless the Chicago baseball team is doing roadwork down on the Ice Pack, there must be at least two sets of young bear prints.

"Mother must be somewhere about" I add to the conversation, knowing full well I am living on borrowed time until Helmericks realizes I can't distinguish twenty-five-foot chunks of ice, never mind analyzing the case histories of twelve-inch paw prints. But let us get back to our story of April thirteenth.

The camp was in a state of excitement because today was the big day. Arthur was thirty-two years young and presents were collecting from all hands. The women folk had been busy since yesterday preparing a birthday cake and a batch of cookies. The youngest feminine representative, three-year old Della Mae, included her favorite marble in the gift basket and was in the process of dragging a sled dog puppy to accompany the marble until we assured her one present was quite sufficient. The cake even had candles when Nanny delivered it to the plane in its cellophane wrapping.

Now where the candles came from is another mystery of the Arctic. Nanny, our Eskimo house mother, refused to tell us her "magic," but I had the definite impression that if I asked for a blue rose, she could have played genie and produced one from the folds of her seal parka. George Woods parted with a very old and valuable possession of his, an ancient Eskimo arrowhead. George sent a message that Arthur had better kill his polar bear with this birthday present. My personal opinion was that he had as good a chance of clobbering Nanook with Della Mae's marble. I hasten to say my opinion was not voiced.

An added insight on the gracious character of this fine Eskimo is that when George Woods gave me the arrowhead to deliver to Arthur, he plainly saw my admiring glance. George quickly hurried back to the footlocker under his cot and produced the only other valuable relic he owned, a magnificent whalebone arrow tip. The old gentleman pressed it in my hand with a genuineness and simplicity I forgot still existed.

"Now both hunters will have luck," he said.

No reply was necessary or adequate, but I think he understood the look that passed between us.

I packed an empty shoe box with cigars, pipe tobacco, matches, soap, gum, candy, and a choice selection of gruesome Pocket Book mysteries as my contribution for Arthur's birthday. Then came the inevitable task of listing equipment for flight time. Dry ammunition, clean rifle and pistol in working order, compass, sharp skinning knife, matches in oilskin, stove, fuel, two tents, food supplies, rope, a shovel and pick, extra sweater and parka, and sleeping bags. You see, once you step into that plane, there is an excellent chance that you might not see home camp for weeks.

Veteran Arctic pilots, those who have flown this area for several years and are still walking around, will agree on one thing. Do not try to stretch your luck by flying through an Arctic storm in order to reach base camp and a warm bed. Nobody has done it so far and still remained on the mailing list of Sears Roebuck.

All this packing and unpacking of gear seemed slightly ridiculous and time-consuming until Bud Helmericks pointed out some well known landmarks as we flew each day. He would say:

“See that lead point?” That is where good old Charlie Brown crashed a year ago trying to make it home. Over there by the river bed Jim Smith clobbered three passengers and himself — too thick an ice fog. That stretch of sea ahead, Johnny King, a pretty fair pilot, took off one day and never came back. Must not have read the storm clouds right.”

Well, sir, these and twenty more landscape “highlights” convinced me one scattered cumulus cloud on the horizon would make me vote to land immediately and pitch my tent.

Truly, Arctic weather has a treacherous habit of not announcing itself. Should a person foolishly venture to challenge it, he had better be prepared for a knockout punch. Very few decisions are draws in this part of the world.

Finally, Bud and I had our gear packed into the Arctic Tern, and by the time the presents were added, eight reindeer should have been pulling the plane instead of one engine. The Santa Claus twins headed out towards the Lead. For no specific reason, we charted our course in a more northeasterly direction and how fortunate we did. Within the hour we spotted the most important trophy of all, dog sled tracks. Helmericks was not going to lose them and the magnificent yet terrifying way he handled his plane made

me think he had missed his mission in life. Bud is a natural-born roller-coaster operator.

He dipped the wings and shouted:

"This time we won't lose them. See over there, Bill? The tracks are not two days old."

Now I leave it up to the reader. Who can answer a question with his heart in his mouth, and how in hell could I see with my eyes closed? I mumbled a reply:

"One more acrobatic roll and Art and Opiak will be looking for us."

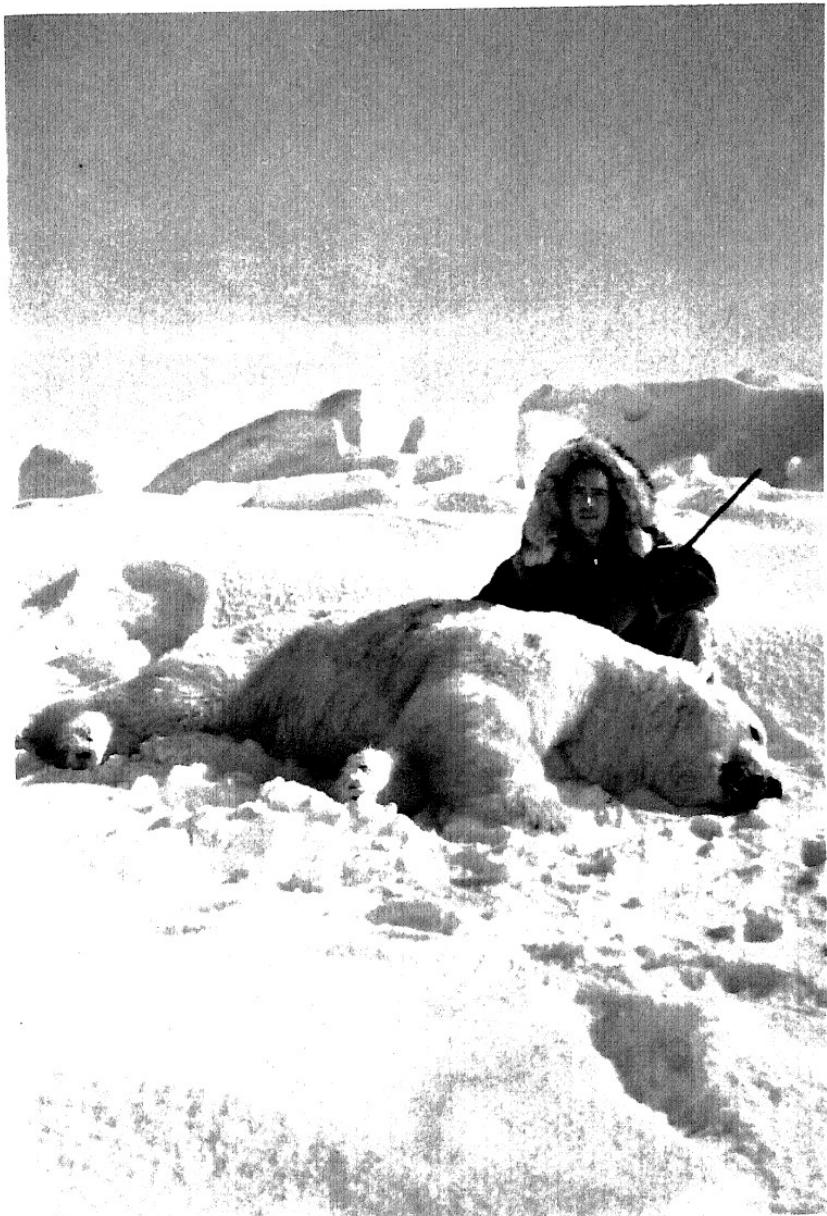
If Bud heard me, he never gave me the satisfaction of an answer. I was forced to open my eyes when Bud shouted he had spotted Art and Opiak's camp. All I saw was a patch of crumbly snow dotted with a few dark patches. My sudden exuberance turned to disappointment when, after a second look, I realized the camp below was an old one the boys had abandoned. Nevertheless, this was the first physical proof we had that they were in the area and apparently unharmed, since sled tracks were still headed out towards the Lead.

Apparently Bud and his eagle eyes spotted something foreign to a usual camp scene.

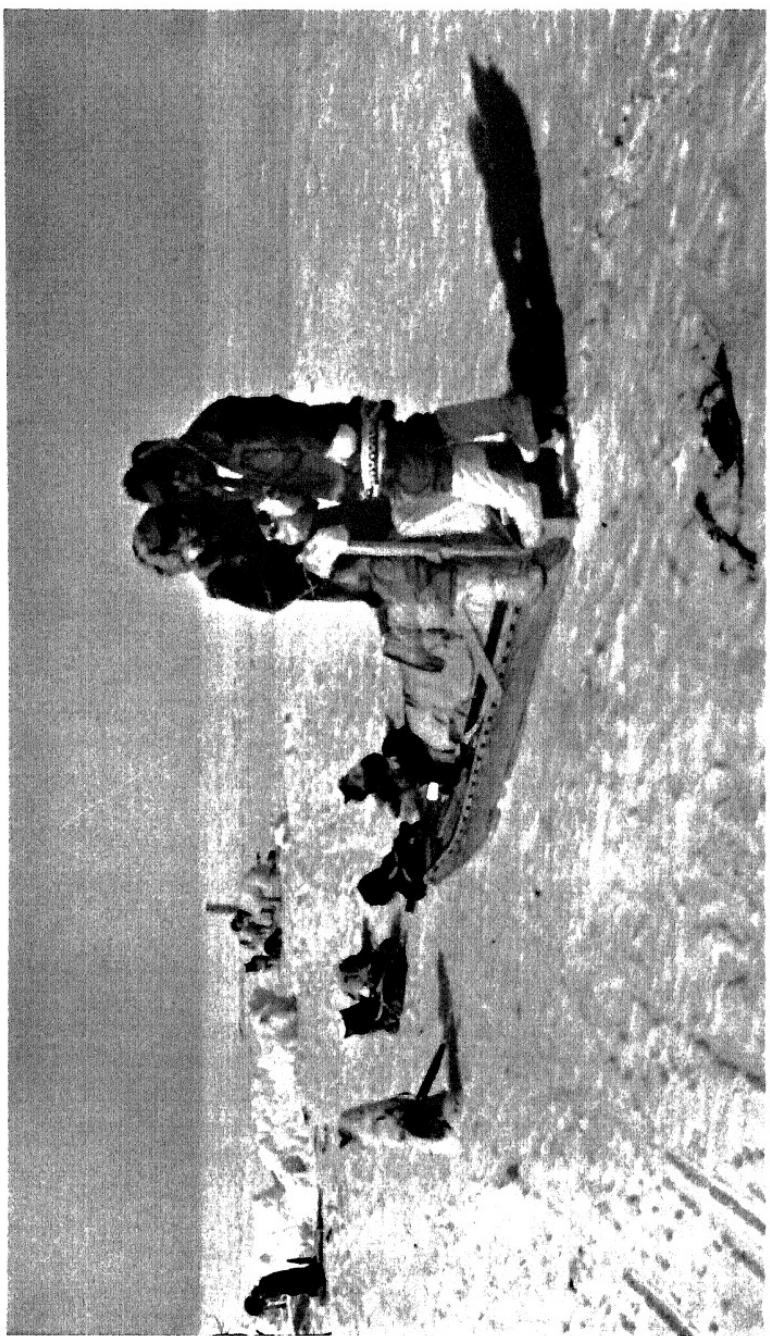
He pretended our Cessna was a Stuka dive bomber and took a closer look-see. I use the term loosely for Helmericks' idea of close ground inspection meant the difference between us and terra firma was something that would have assured my insurance representative a heart attack.

What Bud had perceived was a large ration can with some type of paper message attached.

"We'd better land and see what the boys have to say," announced Bud. I was about to suggest sarcastically that, from the way he had been flying, we needn't go to all that



Another shot of the author's world record class polar bear. Notice the bear's neck width and his mighty forearm and shoulder.



Left to right: Author and Arthur Crowley with one of the two dog sled teams used during this Arctic hunting trip. The sturdy wood sleds are hand built by the Eskimos.

trouble. I could simply stick my hand out of the cockpit window on his next pass and snatch the message. On second thought, I wisely decided to shut my big mouth. He might have done it.

Bud made seven or eight passes at a clearing near the camp, but did not land. I knew this was unusual flying behavior for him and asked him what the trouble was. Bud was not explaining. He just had a feeling all was not well. I often heard Bud remark that an Arctic pilot follows hunches as well as instruments. It might have been my impatient expression or our mutual desire to read the note. Anyway, Bud had me check my safety belt and warned me to hang on. I was very bored as he set the ski plane down on the beautiful smooth white surface — that is, until the plane's skis decided to challenge a thousand pound block of ice nestled below the deceptively smooth snow surface.

We hit and all hell broke loose. Helmericks hung on to the controls for dear life and I damn near grabbed Bud. We took a series of bounces over that ice which would have been a two base hit in any man's league. The Arctic Tern did her desperate best to keep in one piece. She groaned and swerved at every impact and, I might add, the hysterics were not limited to herself. Bud did his ever-loving best to keep the plane aloft, but too much snow had encompassed the skis.

We settled down in a soft low area, and when I say "settled," I mean it was all I could do to force the cockpit door open against the snow bank. Automatically I reached for the shovel, while Bud retrieved the boys' note. Bud read me their message as I was in the process of digging out:

"Hunting lousy. Food about out, you know what you can do with our biscuits. Hope you have enjoyed the pinochle

game. Storms have delayed us, continuing towards the Ice Pack. As a search team, you should drop dead — love, Arthur and Opiak."

I kept digging, but mentally offered our wanderers the birthday cake in an approximate area the biscuits were directed. Bud had a cut lip where his face had been rudely introduced to the plane's panel. My forehead had been supplying claret, since I also forgot to duck. Let's face it, though, we were alive and mad.

After much heavy breathing and reciting of pet slogans, we managed to dig an inclined pathway for the plane's skis. I shoved on the Arctic Tern's wing and helped push our plane to level surface, while Bud gunned the engine in assistance. It took very little encouragement to hop back into the Arctic Tern, and I can honestly say, no take-off beforehand or since has been quite so heartwarming.

We followed the sled tracks until we ran smack into a snow fog bank. This treacherous change of weather forced us to do an about-face and head towards base camp. No use pressing our luck; so we readily gave the decision to the elements.

The Woods tribe met us at the air strip with a hundred questions. How were the boys? Did Arthur enjoy his presents? Had they seen bear? Helmericks had to out scream everyone before our "ground crew" shared our disappointment. Nanny retrieved the cake from the cockpit and clutched it protectively in her arms. Yes, sir, if Arthur does not get the cake, no one will. No doubt her attitude was motivated by the memory of William Holmes robbing her cookie jar.

As I sit in camp finishing today's entry, I cannot help wondering where and how the boys are. Perhaps I am doing

a Sarah Bernhardt. Perhaps it is a feeling of vast loneliness the Arctic gives its visitors, or maybe I am just plain tired and realize how I would feel on that damn Ice Pack if it were my birthday. There is one thing we hunt for from now on and it ain't Nanook. Arthur and Opiak head my list of prize trophies.

April 14

The same thing is on everyone's mind today. Art and Opiak *must* be located. They should have reached the Arctic Lead several days ago. During our council of war we carefully checked the supplies the boys took with them. They have enough food for another few days if they severely ration themselves — that is, unless they have run into a herd of caribou and replenished their supply of fresh meat. You see, here in the Arctic we can not depend on canned goods because of freezing temperatures. Therefore, supplies are frozen meats, fish, biscuits, chocolate bars, jam, tea, and coffee. Vegetables are virtually unknown while on the trail, and vitamins are taken to make up for the deficiency.

We also realize the boys have another impending problem, keeping the dogs healthy. They cannot very well cut down on the dog's rations. That would be like pouring water in a gasoline tank in order to make the car run longer. Bud and I have faithfully included in our daily flight supplies three sacks of frozen fish for the dogs, which brings up a pretty interesting point. Frozen fish are the sole sustenance of the sled dog while traveling the Arctic Prairie Ice Pack. Of course, if the Eskimo or white hunter runs into a herd of caribou, the dogs get fresh meat and the bones, but neither dog nor man counts on this.

Each sled dog gets two fish in the morning and two in the evening. Now for the shocker. You throw him the fish in much the same manner as the circus trainer does to his pet seal. One snap of the sled dog's powerful jaws, a few grinding motions, and the frozen fish disappears, bones and all. Please do not ask me the same question I have asked myself many times. Don't the dogs choke on the fish bones? Apparently not, to my amazement and science's.

The final and most important reason for our concern regarding Art's and Opiak's safety is that they forgot to load two emergency cans of stove fuel when they left camp. Or what could have happened was that they thought the cans really held airplane gas, since that and the clear stove gas were in identical containers.

I do not wish to sound over-dramatic and inject strains of a very tired grade B melodrama in this entry, but camp is not its usual bright self. Weather conditions have temporarily delayed an early take-off to search for the boys. Bud and I had a private tete-a-tete immediately after breakfast and re-reviewed the possibilities. First, Opiak might have been slowed down considerably by the recent warm weather. In loose, soft snow the dogs and sled would bog down. Opiak started the trip with the sled on wooden runners, used exclusively for hard crusted snow and ice. He did, however, pack along steel runners, which work more efficiently on a softer surface. Another possibility is the heartening one I mentioned in a previous entry. They could have run into fresh bear tracks and taken off after them. For all Bud and I knew, the boys could be riding in style on a polar bear skin.

The third possibility we have openly avoided in our discussions. It is too early really to consider a tragedy. For one thing, yesterday's tracks were only several days old and

now we are sure of the boys' vicinity. But if we do not locate them immediately after the ice fog lifts, this morning we will carefully check the areas by the edge of the ocean to make sure one California attorney, one Eskimo, and nine sled dogs are not taking a sea voyage to Siberia. The other distasteful project we must undertake is a pinpoint scrutiny of fresh fissures and ice break-ups caused by pressure areas. Neither Bud nor I have discussed this but we both know how easily the Ice Pack can swallow up anything daring to traverse its surface.

The reader can well understand the state of mind Bud and I were in, knowing how every second of daylight was vital to our search. Yet we had to stand by, helplessly waiting for a morning ice fog to lift. We must have resembled two prospective fathers pacing the waiting room of a maternity ward, judging by the path we trod up and down the landing strip.

Then the weather did an about-face and bright sun shared blue sky. We loaded extra gas tanks at the head of the runway. If unforeseeable difficulties prevented us from locating Art and Opiak within the six-hour flying time left, we would return, refuel, and continue the search.

The entire camp helped load the Arctic Tern, chilled birthday cake and presents included. Bud and I made a last-minute check of a map we had divided into checker-board areas. We intended to fly over each and every map square during our search today.

As I flew over this massive Ice Pack, I considered again the feeling of helplessness Art and Opiak must have if they were halted in a field of forty-foot-high ice chunks and realized we could not see them.

At precisely one hour, fifty-three minutes, and some odd

seconds due west on the Ice Pack, our prayers were answered. Right below us were the boys waving at us from their camp site. But our troubles were not over. Bud could not land the plane, as no safe landing stretches were apparent for miles. It was just our luck that we had to find Art and Opiak camped in a broken ice field.

We flew over the boys and dropped a tin can with a note enclosed. The note instructed Art to take off his parka if either he or Opiak was physically sick. We also informed them that it was impossible to land anywhere near them, so we would have to drop the food supplies. Unfortunately we dared not drop the stove fuel, but we would attempt to land the first thing tomorrow morning if they would head in a northeasterly direction towards a clear ice surface approximately nine or ten miles away. We all realized this would necessitate their striking camp immediately. A maximum of travel over this kind of rough terrain was two miles per hour, that is, if they were not pounced upon by a sudden Arctic storm.

The boys quickly retrieved the note and thank goodness, Arthur's parka stayed on. Bud made a few test passes over their camp area while I timed the dry run of "Operation Food Drop." We had wrapped the supplies in thick blankets stuffed in sacks, hoping to cushion damage caused by the impact. Yours truly felt as nervous as a bombardier on his first mission as Bud made the "for real" pass. "Now," he motioned, and I shoved two sacks of supplies out the cockpit door. One more pass and we dropped the sled dogs' rations.

Art pointed in a northeasterly direction and wrote a big number ten in the snow. Only an Irishman can smile that wide with a nine day growth of beard; so I knew Art was

in good spirits. I noticed with great pride that the first thing our hunting companions did as soon as they reached the supplies was to hurry over to the sled dogs and feed them. This will clue the reader as to the type of men I was privileged to hunt with.

In our excitement we forgot to drop the presents and birthday cake; however, now Art will have an even nicer surprise. No doubt he thought that we had forgotten the big day.

There was nothing more we could do; so, with the final wag of the Arctic Tern's wings, Bud headed our plane due east. The day was beautiful and we decided to scout the area where the boys would camp tomorrow. Perhaps we could come up with some pearls of wisdom for them.

Wouldn't you know it! We had been flying fifteen minutes when dead ahead was the Arctic hunter's most thrilling sight: Nanook, the polar bear, ambling magnificently across the Ice Pack.

As I said previously, Eskimos and those hunting with Eskimos do not purposely hunt on Sundays. However, if big game happens to cross one's path, then there is room for controversy with one's own conscience. Most people up here have the same book of rules, although tempting occasions have the benefit of some mighty speedy reinterpretations.

Bud and I took out our crystal ball. Try as we could, no image of George and Nanny waving angry fists at us was apparent.

We flew over the bear, studying its movements and size. Nanook looked over his shoulder at the strange and noisy bird. He was quite annoyed at the intrusion, for he stood up on his hind legs and angrily made a few swiping passes at us

with his paws. Bud made another pass, this time at about seventy-five feet, and it was then we realized that few hunters find bear this huge. He had enormous tracks, a beautiful pelt and a bad temper. I say "he" because sow bears do not reach this size.

Nanook chose to ignore us and unceremoniously proceeded towards a flat surface area a mile or so away. Bud and I got the same message at the same time. We exchanged looks, tightened our safety belts, and urged the Arctic Tern to higher altitude. Our plan was to stay several thousands of feet over the bear, so as not to scare him into changing directions. If Nanook altered his present course, there would be no chance of bagging him because of the surrounding impassable terrain.

The bear took forever reaching the smooth ice. Bud reduced his engine to minimum power to keep down the noise. Down we glided, coming in behind Nanook.

I had my rifle out of its case and my hand ready at the cockpit door handle. Because we purposely did not take advantage of engine power, we landed with a jarring shock several hundred feet behind the bear. As the plane lost ground speed, I wedged the door open and tumbled out.

An important thing to remember is to get back on your feet as quickly as possible. I say this because one does not remain on his feet for very long when hurtling out of a moving plane. Then you run as fast as possible in the bear's direction until you are on a favorable enough surface to slide into a prone position and fire. Please understand, regardless of how peaceful a record the bear has had in the past Nanook is likely to become more than slightly annoyed and frightened at so abrupt an intrusion. The one thing you

can count on the bear not to do is to sit down and wait to exchange pleasantries. Polar bears are unpredictable, and this is where the real danger lies. Upon personal visual contact, some will discover a newly found occupation, that of an Olympic sprinter. Others are delighted to remain and challenge the intruder; particularly, sow bears with cubs will show the hunter their dentistry.

Fortunately for me, my bear got the sudden urge to visit Siberia but fast. As I swallowed a mouthful of snow sliding into a prone shooting position, I saw only his weaving rump in the scope. I fired once. I fired twice and wounded the hell out of the immediate Arctic landscape. Dimly, I heard Bud's soothing voice: "Steady now, Bill. You are a bit too low."

I took another look through the scope and nobody is ever going to convince me that Nanook did not have his lips pursed to give me the well known raspberry. Nanook had put two hundred yards between us and showed no visible signs of waving a truce flag, when I squeezed off a third shot. Then the panic set in. I am not a Wild Bill Hickok, but I am not a novice hunter either. The side view of the bear's shoulder was smack between the scope's crosshairs as I fired, and the only reward I received for my efforts was a fast disappearing bear. I snapped off a fourth and final shot at a white blur which suspiciously resembled another one of those damn ice chunks. Finally, I completed my idiotic endeavors by shouting a few thousand unprintable words addressed to all polar bears in the world.

Attempting to re-load and follow my bear's tracks ended with my doing a three and one-half gainer, landing on you know what. Bud hurried over and informed me I was for-

tunate in falling, as I was running in the wrong direction. Then guilt, shame, humiliation, and morbidness had a battle seeing which one could reach me first. It was a dead heat.

Bud pointed to a spot fifty yards to my immediate left and the strangest thing happened. An ice chunk with two ears, a pink tongue, and a black nose was quietly settling down in the snow.

"Let's leave him be for a few minutes. They will be his last," suggested Bud quietly.

I sat down and had a smoke, while Bud returned to the plane for his camera. Ten minutes later we approached a very gallant old gentleman who was, by now, peacefully roaming "the happy hunting grounds." My third shot, a direct hit to the heart, had decided whether I would have a rug or not. Nanook died quickly and without pain.

Now began the tough job of skinning. My bear weighed well over twelve hundred pounds, which might not come up to standard in some fiction stories or tall tales slurped around in bars. But in case anyone is interested, many sportsmen and Eskimos have hunted the Ice Pack for years and have never raised a polar bear over a thousand pounds. The average adult bear weighs between seven and eight-hundred pounds and measures about seven and one-half feet between nose and base of tail. I was fortunate enough to have bagged a bear nine feet, three inches long which, when fully mounted, would stand approximately twelve feet, eight inches high.

Bud took particular care in skinning, for we knew we had a real trophy. As Bud finished taking final measurements, he commented,

"Bill, here is a bear you should have mounted life-size. Your Nanook is in the world record class."

I am sure I was too excited and exhausted to com-

hend the full meaning of his remark. I would have agreed to anything at that moment.

Camp had reason to celebrate tonight and we did. Finding the boys and Nanook in one day was a real double header. We carefully explained to George and Nanny how we had happened to come across my trophy and assured them we had not gone out purposely to hunt. They smiled their understanding, which came as a big relief to Bud and me.

Nanny's idea of festivity varied somewhat from mine. She proudly whipped out a caribou neck roast from her stove as her piece de resistance. With mingled emotions, I joined in the victory banquet. There was no way out, as the hunter, by protocol, has his choice of first cut. I won't exactly condemn caribou neck, but I am thankful that there is only one polar bear allowed per license. Also, the slurping sounds emanating from Joe and Lydia retrieving marrow from the neckbone did not exactly inspire my digestive tract.

Marshall changed his entire attitude toward me now that I had shot a bear. I was no longer funny-looking, clumsy-acting stranger. Why, I was almost an Eskimo. I thrived on his every gesture of hero worship. If he kept this up, I might even like him. Her brother's sudden change of heart was a mystery to Della Mae. Nevertheless, if I was good enough for Marshall, she would try to make my life tolerable. I sensed her acceptance and picked her up in my arms to consummate the truce. I got a whack in the nose for my trouble and a series of outraged screams. Marshall forgot for a moment I was his hero and tried out his new boots on my shins. As usual, George came to my rescue. I sulked on my cot and forbade the little monsters to look or touch my bear. Now there were three children in camp.

As I go to sleep tonight, I am grateful I have my bear.

The pressure of the hunt is over. Yet I know within my heart, I will never shoot Nanook again. It is difficult to explain. Perhaps if he had charged me or I had been heroically saving some one else's life, I might feel differently. I am neither proud nor ashamed, simply realizing here is a big game trophy I have always wanted to attain and now that I have, further desire for Nanook has died with my Nanook today.

I guess my final thoughts tonight were a prayer of thankfulness that Arhur and Opiak were safely located, a special message "upstairs" for good flying weather tomorrow, so we can reach the boys; and if we shoot Arctic wolves this week, how far is Nanny going with this "hunter's pot" routine?

April 15

I woke up this morning with the intention of looking outside for my bear skin to be sure the whole thing was not a dream. Only the bear skin, with meat, was inside resting by the stove. After I had curled up in my sleeping bag last night, the Woods family must have had a conference and decided the skin would be easier to clean if kept warm. As you can see, life with the Eskimos is extremely informal.

Tremendous disappointment! A snow fog descended on camp this morning, temporarily cancelling flying possibilities and contacting the boys. If we do not deliver the birthday cake soon, the frosting is likely to be Arthur's downfall, not Arctic storms or polar bears.

I figured since flying was out of the question, I could concentrate on my favorite form of Arctic exercise: curling up with a good book in my sleeping bag. I unobtrusively slid into my feather-down castle and was about to find out where

the buxom blond's body was hidden, when Old Faithful (meaning Helmericks, of course) came stomping into the cabin, holding several boxes of rifle ammunition. I buried my nose into chapter six of my whodunnit and at the same time wished that my Fairy Godmother would change me into an ant or, better yet, a baby ant. No such luck. Bud ambled over to the cot and announced that seal and ugrug hunting (giant bearded seal) required patience and top marksman-ship. I mumbled something about how one of my better virtues was patience, and Bud clearly reviewed the agonizing de-tails of my first and only seal stalk, the one I thoroughly botched up.

There is one exit to our living quarters, that being the cabin door Bud was so appropriately shielding. I was trapped. On with the five pair of socks, over the head with the two sweaters, struggle into the two pairs of snow pants, tuck the wool muffler in, inch the feet into the snow boots, struggle into the parka, take off the parka because we forgot to put the cigarettes in the shirt pocket, on with the parka, search for the shooting glasses, gather the rifle, ammunition, binoculars, stuff the mouth with gum, so we won't say anything nasty, and out the door we go following Bud. Damn that seal!

The rifle practice was the usual horrible thing: black and blue shoulder, ringing in the ears, and a not very impres-sive bulls-eye target to hang in the den — although I must admit that a few more of those rascals were finding them-selves at home in that weaving, black circle.

I may be flippant in my coverage of these shooting range accounts and I know I should not be, particularly if there are novice hunters reading my nonsense. Actually, the

most essential thing any hunter must have is confidence—confidence in himself and confidence in the weapon he carries. Stalking an elusive game trophy may take hours, days, or even weeks, and then the hunter may have only one shot. Travel in a steaming jungle for days upon end for one glimpse of a jaguar's rosettes, or stumble over loose rock and wind around dizzying mountain ledges for that one second your rifle scope places a dall sheep in your lap, or, in this case, walk five miles over fields of broken ice, slipping and sliding up and down impudent forty-foot-high ice barriers blocking your way for a fleeting glance of Nanook's white rump. Try these things once, and if you are still in an amateur marksmanship league, you had better hope your guide is as conscientious as mine. Sermon's over.

I retired to my cot with a bottle of liniment. I was a bit of a martyr, feeling sorry for myself. I foolishly refused Nanny's luncheon invitation of baked beans and "some kind of cold meat." Perhaps the polar bear skin stretched out on the floor, fur side down, gave my martyrdom a little incentive.

I tried to give my full attention to the "missing blond," but the activity at the foot of my cot won out over the Pocket Book heroine. Frankly, I could not have been more satisfied if the Woods had staged a cobra-mongoose battle. Nanny, George, and Lydia produced some knives and one meat slicer that looked suspiciously like the one used to carve the evening roast. A flash of steel and they commenced to separate the bear's fat from the skin. Their work was painstakingly accurate. One slip of the blade and the skin would be badly damaged. With lightning speed, the steel sliced again and again, until eighty pounds of reddish blubber were removed.

I made sure that I, personally, dumped the blubber two ice hills away from camp, for I remembered Nanny's non-committal answer when I asked her the other day what type of shortening she used in her cooking.

The bear skin was taken outside where it was dragged inside and out over the powdered snow surface. This is the first step in cleaning a fur skin. Everyone took turns at playing sled dog. I am certain that at the end of my three-hundred-yard trot I must have sounded like one.

The weather had a slightly more promising complexion, although what was heavy fog earlier, remained a thick haze. Bud excused himself from the group, saying he was going to rig up a "Helmericks invention," in case we were graced with several hours of flying weather.

Meanwhile, we scrubbed Nanook's fur with snow in order to clean the remaining bloodstains. I was pleased to find my bear had the unusual features of a truly white pelt. Most readers will think this not unusual, as I did my first days of hunting — that is, until I saw twenty bear or so. Without exception, every polar bear I observed had a definite yellowish cast.

After the community scrubbing, the bear skin was stretched out on the snow and pegged down. It will take a good three weeks of sunshine to dry out the fur, as much water still remains in the inside oily skin surface. As a last touch, we spread salt over the outstretched hide to make sure old Nanook would be well preserved for Jonas Brothers, world renowned taxidermists in Seattle, Washington.

Bud returned, lugging two massive shapes amidst a maze of cords and white nylon. This was the "Helmerick's invention." Bud had packed blankets and felt insulation around

our two stove fuel tank containers. Then he had rigged up some homemade parachutes, apparently from an old surplus chute he had lying around. Perfect! Now would it work? Only a slight haze remained over camp. Bud felt we had a good chance to reach the boys even if landing was prohibited.

We packed all of our emergency gear and supplies in the Arctic Tern. We could not ignore the fact that once we left camp, another fog bank might set in, forcing us to make an emergency landing somewhere on the Arctic Ice Pack or Prairie.

Lady Luck smiled on us — not a really tremendous grin, but we did locate the boys. The hitch was that we could not risk landing, as it would have been suicidal with the existing poor ground visibility. We would have missed them altogether if it had not been for Bud's accurate plotting.

Arthur and Opiak undoubtedly heard us flying overhead for quite some time, for when we finally broke through a thick fog formation and spotted them they were laying strips of tin foil on the snow to attract our attention.

I dropped a note, explaining that we dared not land but would return tomorrow, weather permitting. The next part of my note seemed strange even to me: "Parachuting stove fuel — take cover if chutes fail."

It was so hazy too discern faces, and there were moments when their entire camp was swallowed up with rolling fog banks. Bud made as low a pass as he dared and I threw out the fuel cans. I was particularly cautious, for I had visions of being entangled in the parachute shroud lines and floating down to earth as a special bonus prize for Arthur. Both chutes opened, although one container fell to earth considerably faster than its mate.



The author shown with the Arctic's rarest trophy, the ugrug or giant bearded seal. Holmes is the second man to have ever shot an ugrug.



Left to right: Opiak, Arthur Crowley, author. Camp on the Arctic Ice Pack is wherever you pitch a tent. This particular camp is many miles from land and rests on top of the Arctic Ocean. Dark glasses are worn constantly as a protection from the blinding snow glare.

I must assume the parachute drop was successful and thank goodness the boys will know the friendly warmth of a stove again. Bud wasted no time in returning to camp. The Arctic Tern beat a new fog bank in by merely minutes. That landing strip felt mighty good.

As we taxied up to our plane's tie-downs, Nanny let out her tribal war whoop, which announced mealtime and any other occasion when she demanded the camp's attention. I remember one time Nanny caught me dead to rights testing her new cake frosting. The same war whoop was let out as I hit the happy ice road.

Tonight was devoted to sharpening skinning knives, finding out what truly happened to my blond heroine, and listening to Lydia's favorite three wornout records. I analyzed the situation. If I broke the records, then she would play that damn guitar all the time, and no records can be worse than that.

Towards bed time, I must confess a tinge of homesickness. Regardless of how well a hunt is going, activity can only take up so much time and then memories of home surely come before sleep. The sled dogs have decided to try opera in their nightly serenade; so I will wisely grope for my earplugs and wish you a pleasant good-night.

April 16

Fortunately, I slept through our canine population's operatic version of *Aida* and woke up to a beautiful, sunshine-filled sky. The baby, Della Mae, had had her ten hours sleep and was bouncing around everyone's feet, making a general nuisance of herself — not an unusual habit of this Eskimo debutante, I might add. First, the sugar bowl

found its way into her searching little hands and down onto the floor. A series of articles were ravaged next: Opiak's guitar, two of my books, George's pipe, Nanny's new mixing bowl (permanently on the sick list until glue is flown in). Finally, to top off the morning's festivities, Della Mae discovered that if she threw a bottle hard enough at the pretty window, the pretty window would break and sound of shattering glass would make everyone jump off his chair and spill his breakfast. Then Della Mae could laugh at all the twitching people slurping their tea.

You're damn right, I jumped. George jumped twice, once at the initial crash and once at Della Mae. As I have pointed out before, the Eskimos practice peculiar rules in their child-raising program. A long rope was immediately produced, one end tied to the bed, the other end tied around Della Mae's waist. The little monster (she can be an angel) pleaded her case with screams and received a rather rude reply for her trouble. Next a small ruler was produced, only this ruler had a tin pin sticking through one end. Della Mae's derriere was whacked with the ruler, the pin point leading the attack. She issued her complete repertoire of screams — that is, until Della Mae saw the ruler about to descend for a second go-round. The screams subsided and a cautious smile replaced the tears. We finished breakfast in peace.

Where else in the world, except in the Arctic Circle, can a group of fairly intelligent people walk outside, look at the sun and say, "What a gorgeous day! It's only freezing!"

The plane was loaded with our usual emergency precautions and off we went to contact Arthur and Opiak. In the

Arctic one must be ready for surprises, but I was not prepared for this one. We found the camp. The tent was pitched, camp gear was lying around, but no boys or dog sled were visible. Bud landed immediately. A big, fat note was pinned to the flap, informing us that Art and Opiak had spotted two polar bears early this morning over by the rough ice areas and were off in hot pursuit. They assured us that they would be back by mid-afternoon and hoped we would understand their conspicuous absence.

Bud and I got our dander up, but on second thought, we could not blame them. No doubt, this had been neither a comfortable nor a pleasant trip for Arthur. The chances were that the two bears they mentioned were the first living game animals Art had seen since he launched his sled dog safari. We left word we would return at mid-afternoon and that we planned to do a little hunting too.

Bud purposely flew in the opposite direction from the sled tracks, so we would not frighten the bears Art and Opiak were stalking. We headed toward the open lead in hope some seals were sunning themselves. Flying mile after mile over barren ice fields can be boring in any situation other than ours. Daydream for a second and you will miss that fresh bear print. Close sleepy lids and you will not see that tiny black spot on the ice. We were looking for such a spot. Traveling four hundred feet in the air, at one hundred and fifteen miles per hour, means that speck of black is a seal.

There were, apparently, no sun worshippers. Two white foxes were gossiping beside an ice crack, and if there were any bears in our flight path, they graduated from camouflage school at Fort Dix. Then we saw it! Not exactly a black speck, but more like an ink blot. This meant one thing. We

had come upon the Arctic's most difficult-to-obtain trophy: ugrug, the giant bearded seal. For one thing, the ugrug is not nearly as plentiful as the common seal; in fact, he is a rarity. Further, the ugrug has the unfortunate faculty of possessing radar-like perception. If a hunter plans to stalk for hours, testing shifting winds and the softness of the ice surface for noise, weaving cautiously in proper camouflaged clothing and anything else he can think of, it's no news to the clairvoyant ugrug. Let a hunter get cute and pretend he is a seal by inching forward toward his trophy, and he will get an ugrug horse laugh for his efforts. As I briefly mentioned in a previous entry, copying the motions of a seal while stalking a seal sometimes works if you are extremely adept in the art. But not so with big brother.

The reader knows now that each individual seal will have a fairly consistent sleeping pattern, so many seconds raised and awake, so many seconds lying down asleep. Now the ugrug sleeps anywhere from five to twenty seconds, then raises his radar antennae and sits up for as damn well long as he wants. So take my advice, all prospective ugrug hunters, throw away the watch and rule book when you approach your adversary.

Bud searched for a landing space down wind and far enough away to prevent the ugrug from getting the general picture, yet near enough so as not to put me in a state of collapse. We settled for a stretch of ice three miles away from my intended trophy.

Our landing gave us the usual nasty shocks from snow-covered ice chunks. Here in the Arctic the danger is not so much in hunting the animal itself, rather in the elements and the landing and take off necessary to obtain the trophy. Our

gallant little plane creaked and protested as we taxied to a halt. As always, she came through like a veteran.

The first mile of the stalk we talked, because I was physically able to. The second mile I was silent, because my breath had vanished. The third mile I could not have talked regardless, as the ugrug could have picked up our voices with any fickle winds.

I kept thinking the last five hundred yards, while sliding on my stomach over some very wet snow, what the hell would I do if I looked up and saw a bear crawling towards me. I was *almost* too miserable to care.

Bud motioned me to go on ahead and try to get a shot. He figured two of us approaching any closer was stretching our luck too far. I crawled towards a small ice mound and inched my way to the top for a closer look. I was flabbergasted! The ugrug was lying by the ocean's edge seventy-five yards ahead and was looking in my general direction. I ducked down for a respectable time, praying he had not seen the movement. I rechecked my rifle, scratched an ear, wished I had never heard of the Arctic, and again slipped over the top of the mound. Then I sighted in and tried not to make the slightest movement. I knew I would not have time to "go over the top" properly, sight in, and shoot all at the same time. As long as the ugrug did not see the motion, I had a chance. Granted, not a very good one at so short a distance, but I had not dragged my personality three miles for laughs. Sure enough, the ugrug reared up his head. I played statue. I cannot possibly relate the strange, helpless, stupid feeling I had, trying to outstare this giant bearded seal. After a two minute contest, the ugrug simply thought nothing alive could look as silly as I. He promptly snorted with disgust and lay back to rest.

Brother ugrug is still dreaming. I did not want to chance a two out of three staring match; so I let him have it in the head, the brain shot being the only way an ugrug can be instantly killed. A few hunters have emptied their rifles in an ugrug's body, only to see the ugrug leap into nearby water as if nothing more had bothered him than Arctic mosquitos.

I physically could not move from my spot: shock accompanied by disbelief had settled in. Although Bud assures me to the contrary, I vaguely remember detecting a small prayer of thanks fleeting across his startled face. Skinning a thousand pounds of ugrug is no easy task, regardless of how much one anticipates his handsome skin as a rug. To be sure, two very tired hunters dragged themselves back to the plane.

On this return trek, Bud casually informed me that I was the second man to have ever shot an ugrug. I looked disbelieving at him and realized he was completely serious.

"Why didn't you tell me how important an ugrug was before I shot?", I demanded.

Bud replied innocently, "Then there would still have been only one ugrug on record."

I stomped on in silence.

An hour's flying time and we were over Art's and Opiak's camp. This time they were there to greet us, waving hysterically as we landed. I wish I could report an historic verbal exchange such as the one credited to Stanley and Livingston. The enthusiastic exchange of greetings, accompanied by much pounding on the back, had too many descriptive words slipped in to win the approval of the Board of Education. We sat down to hot tea, biscuits, and jam. Rather than properly listening to Arthur's and Opiak's troubles, I found myself running off at the mouth, relating the hunting adventures

Bud and I had experienced. I was in the middle of a highly exaggerated account when I realized what a damn fool I was. Here were two men suffering from torturing physical exertion, cold, hunger, exhaustion, and I was telling them how tough the Arctic was. They were trying to listen politely, smile at the right times; yet Art could not keep that strange glaze out of his eyes. I knew then my hunting partner had "had" it. And small wonder, traveling across the Ice Pack against insurmountable odds, fighting forty-below-zero temperatures and paralyzing winds. Opiak was not exactly the picture of brimming health, though he was better adjusted to these hardships. Several days' rest, with hot food and a warm tent, and our Eskimo companion would be his old self.

We packed up Arthur and his gear, leaving additional stove fuel and rations for Opiak and his sled dog team. Bud held a conference with his number one Eskimo hunter, and it was decided that I would meet the dog sled team at this same camp site tomorrow.

I listened to this bit of news as to a prison sentence I knew was inevitable. Art had had his share of this hunter's paradise and now it was my turn to do my stretch! I was not forced to, mind you, but please keep in mind most grown men are little boys at heart and think like little boys and "I'll show them. If he can do it, so can I!" You are now reading a child's diary.

I waved goodbye to Opiak, assuring him I would bring good weather and knowing damn well there is no such animal in these here parts. Art opened up his presents we had forgotten to give him in the excitement. I did not dare give him the cake for fear he would bite into it and fracture his ivories.

Art acted as if base camp was a paradise and I imagine it was. He caressed his army cot in the same manner as I have seen him, under different conditions, do to other props. He kept saying over and over: "I can sleep without my boots and parka."

Nanny snapped him out of his trance by serving hot biscuits, caribou steaks, baked potatoes, corn, and an apple pie. Nanny hovered over Art like a bantam hen until a fit of jealousy seized me and I reminded all present that after all, this was my going-away supper as well. After uttering this little gem, I felt a complete jackass and insisted Art have the last steak and the piece of pie left over.

Lydia flirted outrageously with Art from behind her record player. Arthur flirted back and I knew then my hunting buddy had been out on the Ice Pack far to long. Joe perceived this obvious switch of affections and centered his attentions on sharpening his hunting knife. It was a perfectly natural thing to do except for the fact that Joe never took his eyes off Arthur's throat. Arthur reviewed the situation and made a command decision. He asked Marshall for the loan of his comic books and philosophically went to bed with Minnie Mouse.

I must say it is nice to see my hunting compadre safely tucked in his sleeping bag tonight. From the look on his sleeping face, Art, too, is glad he is "home," Goodnight.

April 17

The dreams I had last night! *The Perils of Pauline* never showed its motion picture audience the thrills and heroics I went through. I woke up exhausted. People were being unusually quiet in the cabin. Nanny was tiptoeing around, Lydia's guitar was hanging on the wall peg, George

was outside impressing the camp dogs to be quiet by waving a club, and little Della Mae's mouth had been stuffed with cookies and anything else available upon her awakening. The reason for this consideration was not yours truly, rather our smiling, sleeping camp hero, Arthur J. Crowley.

In all seriousness, Art badly needed the rest after his Ice Pack ordeal. Ice Pack! This reminded me that tonight I would be somewhere out there, and might I add this thought did not cause waves of exuberance. Nanny fixed pancakes for me this morning and I had three helpings, not because Nanny's recipe is a threat to Aunt Jemima — quite the opposite. I knew from past experiences, this breakfast dish would stay in my stomach for a long, long time. Simply a question of self-preservation, should our food supplies dwindle the next week or so.

Bud helped me check out my list of equipment, and before I knew it, there was little reason left why I should not be out on the lead. I busied myself with vital last minute assignments, such as re-counting my four pairs of socks, exchanging reading material, and wiping a non-existent spot from my sunglasses. Bud was completely aware of my stalling tactics and in his ingenious way lowered the proverbial boom.

"Since we have so much time, why don't we go down to the firing range and squeeze off a box of shells?" suggested Bud, the picture of treacherous innocence.

That did it. I mustered my dignity and replied,

"Why that would be robbing me of precious minutes on the lead, Bud. I can't wait to get there and hunt those ice fields. Gives one a great pioneer spirit!" I believe my statement was followed by a hearty laugh that stuck right in my throat. Helmericks proved his point and I trapped myself.

Arthur had arisen by now and was busy giving me points on self-preservation.

The time had come. I put on an Academy Award performance bidding everyone farewell. There was much hand shaking, slaps on the back, voices quivering (only from me) until I detected a slightly nauseated expression on Bud's and Art's faces. Could it be that I hammed it up too much?

Back again we flew across the Arctic Prairie, over the Ice Pack, until we located Art's old camp site. Everything was fine, except there was no sign of Opiak and his dog sled team. Bud circled over the tiny tent Art had pitched several days before and then picked up the fresh dog sled tracks heading due west. Some seven miles away, Art spotted Opiak blissfully driving his dog team in the camp's general direction, so Bud turned back towards the Ice Pack camp. The question did enter my mind what Opiak was doing so many miles out of camp. If it had been me, I never would have moved out of my sleeping bag, considering the exhausting time Opiak had recently experienced. However, I have learned by now that it is foolish to try to understand an Eskimo's thought process. Opiak could have spotted game or just simply decided to take an extended morning constitutional. At any rate, he was headed in the proper direction and should be in my future camp site within several hours.

Bud ran true to form and landed a good mile and one-half away from the tent. This meant playing sled dog again. During the last mile of trudging, I made mental notes to travel with a toothbrush and a bottle of brandy in the future.

The boys promptly settled me and my belongings in camp and were not very subtle about their desire to be on their way while hunting weather prevailed. I casually hinted

they stay for tea and Bud reminded me the stove and supplies were on the sled. I suggested building a snow man, playing charades, reading palms, and I must say that I had a difficult time keeping up with them on their tramp back to the plane.

They wished me all sorts of good luck and to add insult to injury, Bud asked me to give the plane a push in case ice had formed under the skis. The last visual impression I had of my hunting companions was somewhat dimmed by a sheet of snow in my face from the prop blast.

Back once more over the beaten path and I went about my camp housework.

"Actually things could be worse, couldn't they?" I kept telling myself. "Opiak will be coming over the next hill in a matter of minutes and Opiak has jam, cake, tea, a warm stove, and all the comforts of home."

I built a three-foot snow wall around the tent, something I had read in a book somewhere. Actually it made sense, as then most of the wind stopped whistling through my newly acquired residence. Yet I never was so busy that I wasn't glancing towards the snow ridge where Opiak should be making his entrance shortly.

I was still looking at that damn snow ridge, except I could not see too well because it was eight hours later and time for sensible people to be in bed. The wind decided to go all out tonight, celebrating my arrival, and the temperature was not going to be outdone. All I know is that *no one* in the world was any colder or more miserable than I was the night of April Seventeenth.

I retreated to my tent and put on all the extra clothing I had brought along. Then, climbing into my sleeping bag with parka still on, I reviewed my situation — a not too comfort-

ing one at that. Here I was, in the middle of nowhere, freezing you know what off, without transportation, food and heat. The wind was blowing from the west, which was a danger signal even the village idiot could understand. Whenever a strong west wind blows a long enough time on the Ice Pack, it will cause the ice to break up and move out to open sea, with or without me on it. I remind the reader that once the hunter travels the Ice Pack, he is literally walking on top of the Arctic Ocean.

To make matters worse, a heavy ice fog was moving in, ideal weather for hungry bear to stalk seal or moronic hunters in uncompromising situations. It is one thing to be able to be on equal footing with Nanook in broad daylight. One readily figures the bear's temperament and, more important, the hunter is initially the aggressor. Now the tables were turned. At night time, Nanook roams the Ice Pack and he is the aggressor. Polar bears seem to prefer foggy nights to do their stalking in and from what George Woods told me, it is just this kind of night Nanook's digestive juices are bubbling overtime. A ridiculous thought occurred to me. Would I look more or less like a seal if Nanook stuck his chops through the tent flap? After due consideration, I decided freezing to death holds no more attraction than being an hors d'oeuvre; so I kept things status quo. My nerves had a workout. Each sound was magnified and interpreted by my wild imagination. I tried to find comfort in fingering my revolver and hunting rifle. I do not know how many times I cocked my weapons in readiness, but every time the tent canvas flapped, a tent pole creaked, or there was a grinding sound caused by ice pressure, I had my arsenal out and was prepared to give General Custer historic competition. A simple

truth is that most people have experienced fear. I remembered the St. Christopher medal I wear around my neck. Thinking about the medal and what it had personally meant in the past gave me a very special warmth inside. I know this: whether a man attends church regularly or not, when impending danger builds up and a question of life or death fills a man's mind, he will turn to his religion if he has ever once embraced it. I agree we use this faith too often when it suits us best in critical hours, but perhaps this conclusively shows us the importance and greatness of belief.

Around midnight, the wind successfully uprooted one side of the tent. Instinctively, I made a dash for the tent flap entrance before I realized the humor in the situation. Half the tent was open. The language that drifted over the Ice Pack would have made even an old seal roué blush, but it seemed appropriate at the time.

Sheer exhaustion caused me to doze in the wee hours of the morning. I did remember to include a small prayer that I really did not mean everything I said about Opiak and the Eskimo Nation in general, although I confess I did not wipe the slate clean either.

April 18

I have not the slightest idea what I expected to find next to me this morning and it certainly was not Opiak. I did look over hopefully, only to see more of the tent. I moved all fingers and toes experimentally to see what parts of my body were ready for Bird's Eye packaging. I felt a sense of relief to discover the body was intact. The vapor from my breath would have done justice to an Elk's smoker. Halfway out of my sleeping bag, and I decided this was the wrong

move. I did not know the right move, mind you, but going from zero to sub-zero did not make sense. My thoughts wandered on and I realized that I must find a subject that would be a good mental stimulant. Take Opiak, for instance, I did think about Opiak and in no time at all I felt tingling warmth, or was I just shaking with rage? Be charitable, old boy, I told myself. Think of beautiful things — birds, flowers, girls, bees, Hawaii, girls, steam baths, girls. Still Opiak led the field.

The weather chose today for one of its more nasty moods. Ice fog had rolled in from the sea, accompanied by numbing winds, thus eliminating any chance of Bud's flying in to see how "the happy little ice scouts" were faring. Now I fully realized how Arthur must have felt. No doubt Bud and Art were laboring under the false illusion that Opiak and I were enjoying a day of rest, sipping hot tea in a snug warm tent, while swapping traveling salesmen stories. No doubt, Opiak was having his share of troubles due to the weather. Then there was the additional horrifying thought that Opiak might be under the impression Bud had dropped off additional supplies, a stove and fuel; so why not camp where he was as I was perfectly comfortable? Sounds illogical? Remember, the Eskimo is no mental giant.

I finally urged my tired bones out of the sleeping bag in order to take a look outside. A large portion of ice had broken up during the night and left an alarmingly short distance between the camp site and the open sea. This accounted for the rumblings of last night. If there were to be any repeat performances, I would be calling "Comrade" to the next human being I came in contact with. Last night's ice breakup was well on the way to Siberia, not really at all a

long distance from here. At least, I would get fed in the salt mines.

I picked up another bit of news during my brief outdoor exploration. Unless I had walked in my sleep and my feet grown three times their size, my camp had had visitors last night, visitors leaving three different sets of fresh bear prints circling the camp. Two sets of prints belonged to a medium-sized sow bear and her cub. They directly approached the outskirts of camp and then the prints, after much tracking back and forth, headed off towards the ocean. The sow bear must have been uncertain of the strange looking tent and not being alone, she decided not to subject her cub to possible danger. But the tracking back and forth indicated she was giving serious thought to dropping in for tea with yours truly. The third set of prints gave me a dry taste in my mouth. They belonged to a large male and there was nothing undecisive about their line of travel. Nanook had been traveling in a direction at least forty-five degrees away from camp. His scent or sight had tipped him off to William Holmes' country residence and that is the direction he took out for. Nanook had not had the caution his feminine counterpart showed. He had circled the tent numerous times and on one occasion had come within a few feet of the tent flap entrance. What changed his entry plans only Nanook knows. It certainly was not my snoring. Actually, animals have a sixth perceptive sense for danger, as do their two-legged cousins. I know one thing and perhaps Nanook felt it. At the first glimpse I had of a black nose and pink tongue poking through the tent entrance there would have been as much steel flying in that direction as is found in the Golden Gate Bridge. Anyway, I knew what to expect tonight. Whether this is good or bad depends on whether one is a

fatalist or not. *If* I had cans, I could rig up a string of them around the tent as a type of perimeter area warning. But then again, *if* I had a plan, I could get the hell out of this predicament. Mr. Kipling had the right idea. *If* is a big word.

No use staying outside and letting hungry hidden eyes divide the spoils. I retired to my castle. After digging around in my duffel bag, I found a Pocket Book edition. Wouldn't you know; the title was *The Sinking of the Lusitania*. I read the book twice and could not sympathize with the author's case any more than I could with my own predicament.

Persistent grumblings from my stomach had already announced three mealtimes; so I settled for a handful of snow (there was plenty for seconds) and a stick of gum. There were no signs of the weather clearing. The wind had let up somewhat, but still came ominously from the west.

After my banquet I went outside with the hope of seeing Opiak come charging over the hill. My feet began to hurt me and I knew they must have circulation or suffer the consequences. Feet have been my "Achilles' heel" since World War II when I spent 120 days in a German prisoner-of-war camp. I was captured in Northern France during sub-zero temperature and my feet froze. The prison doctors did nothing to curb my trenchfoot; therefore, I am more sensitive to exposure than the average person. The pain began to ease, once I had stomped around for a few minutes, yet I was not about to continue my jig after dark.

You can generally tell where the lead's open water is located on the Ice Pack because heavy cloud formations hover over the ocean. It then occurred to me dark clouds had been hovering all day past a nearby ice ridge. I was not fond of the prospect of a hike; yet a tiny voice told me

to turn my baby blue eyes on the other side of yonder ice barrier. I did, and damn it, there was the Arctic Ocean. Now came the sixty-four dollar question: abandon this camp now and head out in the general direction of base camp nearly three hundred miles away? I would eliminate the possibility of an Arctic Ocean voyage, but how long could a man survive on the Ice Pack without provisions and proper shelter? Even if I started, one light snowfall would cover my tracks, foiling rescue by land or air. My second choice: to stay secure in my sleeping bag and pray the first upheavings of ice would not come, and hope Opiak would reach me with warmth and supplies. Water was no problem and I could last a week without food, longer if it weren't that my body was using up so much energy trying to keep warm. Naturally, if the weather permitted Bud to fly in, all problems would be solved. Unfortunately, there was no choice with this Arctic version of Russian Roulette.

Tonight I relived every moment of an old picture I saw, *Henry VIII*, the reason being the fantastic banquet scenes they showed in practically every shot. King Henry and brother Holmes went through ten ducks, five roasts, three geese, and numerous other palatable delicacies before my chewing gum went stale and spoiled the illusion.

I had a repeat performance with nerves, particularly since I had seen physical evidence Nanook was not extinct in these here parts. I will not bore the reader with the noises and false alarms that occurred all night. By one o'clock I was exhausted enough not to care if the entire polar bear populace held a convention in my tent. My eyes would not stay open and that is all I remember.

I woke up to faint dog barkings. Naturally, I thought

the old mind had snapped and violin music would follow the canine yelps. But there was no mistaking the choice Eskimo dialogue Opiak uses exclusively on his dog team.

Never was an Eskimo so startled as when a delirious hunter came bounding out of the tent like a Saint Bernard puppy and hugged a non-committal Opiak; I had immediately pardoned him on sight. Opiak's one sentence of explanation told the entire story. Lame dogs, from a free-for-all fight, the storm, and broken runners on the sled delayed his arrival. He also thought I had a stove and provisions, although I have never yet been able to understand his assumption. Only once did I almost revert to my "Hate Opiak Week." That is when he grinned at me and said: "You musthavbeen cold, hungry, yah?"

The burning stove, hot tea, and fried caribou, topped off with a cigarette, renewed my hope that I would see this damn hunt through in one piece. It is amazing, even frightening, to realize how a little warmth and food can mean the difference between life and death.

I am thankful to report, Opiak brought a change of wind. A fairly gentle breeze, say about twenty miles per hour, is blowing from the southeast. If the wind remains constant, we are likely to have clear weather in a day or two. At least, Opiak thinks we are safe for the remainder of tonight and that is good enough for me. These Eskimos live daily with danger, and taking unnecessary chances is something "silly white hunters do."

As I am about to fall asleep, I can see Opiak's dim outline by the tent flap. Occasionally he looks outside, checking the slightest shifting of the wind. He cocks his ear at all

sounds, straining to interpret the Ice Pack's movements. Opiak turns and sees that I am watching him. He smiles. "You go sleep; Opiak take good care."

I will go to sleep. How different from last night! The difference being seven very tired and heroic dogs who right now are licking bloody paws resulting from their unceasing efforts to reach me, a saucy burning Coleman stove, a contented stomach filled with forty-three cents worth of groceries, and, most important, a very gallant young Eskimo who unknowingly made me feel very ashamed and humble. I hope everyone tonight is at peace with the world. I am.

April 19

Opiak and I overslept this morning, no doubt a reaction from our past two days' efforts. My watch and conscience informed me that no Arctic hunter should seek the comforts of a tent after eleven a.m. Nevertheless I went back to sleep.

Opiak stirred his tired bones at noon. The dogs' howling reminded us that the canine world did not necessarily live by Daylight Saving Time. I sheepishly struggled into my boots for a look outside. First mistake of the day. My efforts were rewarded by a gust of wind and snow flurries right in the mouth. I checked around for our familiar land mark, the ice ridge, and could not see ten feet in any direction. Ice fog and a driving snow took care of that. I wove my way over to the barely discernible sled, wondering where the dogs were. I had heard them gossiping a few minutes ago. I did see seven snow mounds and upon closer inspection the mystery was solved. The sled dogs had wisely buried themselves in the snow, letting the hard-surfaced ice crust act as a shield. May-

be it worked with dogs, but it would be a snowy evening in July before I sent in my test case report to the Explorer's Club.

When I staggered back into the tent, Opiak asked me whether I had seen any seal or bear. I was not sure whether this was Eskimo humor or sheer stupidity, so I ignored him. Opiak did not seem to mind, because he went back to singing the only Eskimo song his mother had taught him. To say this ditty had a haunting melody is explanation enough.

Opiak suggested that we break camp and be on our way to another camp site eight miles away. I suggested that Opiak had damn well better pioneer himself out of the tent and peek outside before making any command decisions. My Eskimo friend came reeling back with a mouth full of snow and looking rather foolish.

"Maybe we wait for hour, huh?" he said.

"Maybe we wait for week, huh?" I replied.

I was catching up on my notes when Opiak busied himself over our Coleman stove. I had previously suggested we have our morning cup of tea and biscuits before chopping up the dog's breakfast. This is not as selfish as it sounds. Preparing dog food meant putting beat-up caribou meat bones into a pot of boiling water, the caribou meat being two years old and rank enough to walk to the pot on its lonesome. Add corn meal, stir for one-half hour, add more water and finally dump in fish scraps, heads, tails, gills and so forth. Now I am not condemning this recipe, providing it can be cooked a mile down wind from camp. But try to retain an appetite while this witches' concoction is brewing inside of your tent!

Eskimos have one-track minds. The dogs thoroughly enjoyed their breakfast and I later nibbled on a hard tack biscuit.

By now the wind had almost died down, while ice fog replaced the snow fall. It was not any warmer, but at least the tent had a fighting chance. Audio illusions are plentiful on the Ice Pack; so the distant droning of an airplane did not cause much comment. We took it for granted that no man in his right mind would be flying in such treacherous weather. When the droning became a roar, we scurried outside and lo and behold, we saw an army rescue plane circling camp. Apparently the pilot had not seen any signs of life and was coming in for a much closer inspection. When we tumbled out of our tent Opiak told me an army plane, perhaps the same one, had flown over him two days ago, and now again the army pilot was checking on our safety. No doubt this pilot was assigned to one of the radar stations that stretch across the Arctic Circle, and those army boys want to know the name, rank, and serial number of all living souls roaming this area, seals and bear excluded. Once identity is established (they do not have to talk with you to find out — their little secret, not mine) and provided you are classified as "friend," then they attempt to keep a comforting watch over you, elements permitting. Nobody asks them for this service and few thank them. I am taking this moment formally to express my gratitude to a group of army men I probably will never meet. Their blue star in the white circle was a great comfort.

The chain of radar stations mentioned above is known as the DEW Line. The personnel who man these lonely outposts are responsible for maintaining a watchful vigilance over a vast area adjacent to an unfriendly neighbor. This radar umbrella protection may well be the key to our success in any future full-scale conflict. All pilots flying the Arctic have instructions on specific speeds, altitudes, and

flight patterns to follow. If you doubt the DEW Line's efficiency, take up a plane and fly as you please, but do not be surprised if those tiny silver streaks on your tail turn out to be United States jet fighters.

Opiak and I waved to the army pilot circling overhead and signaled that there was no camp emergency. The army plane dipped its wings in salute and away it flew inland. Now the wind was noticeably absent. We decided to break camp immediately and head towards the new camp site. I had flown over this new camp site area wth Bud and on "warm days" we had seen many seals dotting the ice. Even now it is difficult to realize that we are camping over the Arctic Ocean, and that thousands upon thousands of seals are swimming directly beneath our feet. Not all seals venture out to the open Lead. Granted, I have seen many swimming in the open water, but the majority of seals I have observed have chosen to remain under the Ice Pack. It is not unusual for the Arctic traveler to see in one day hundreds of air holes these seals have punched through the ice surface in order to fill their lungs with oxygen.

The chances of seeing seal at our present camp were slim because of persistent cold weather, lack of sun, and changing ice formations. We had an additional reason for moving to a new area. The dog food on hand would possibly last two more days; thus, obtaining seal meat for our Huskies was of paramount importance.

Opiak and I packed the sled and were folding the last piece of canvas when we heard a plane engine.

"No doubt our army friend," I thought to myself. I looked inland and to my complete amazement a very old friend of mine, The Arctic Tern, came winging her way towards camp. Now I knew two crazy pilots!

I saw Bud and Art wave as they circled camp again and again. Their trouble was obvious. Unfavorable landing conditions were keeping Bud in the air. The boys came in on a low glide, and much to my surprise, a gunny sack came hurtling out of the cockpit door. The bombardier was Art. The sack hit with a resounding thud and a hundred fish scattered in all directions. Our dogs would not go hungry for a while. A dip of the wings and the Arctic Tern headed due north.

We retrieved the fish and I commented to Opiak that our food supplies had not accompanied Operation Fish Drop. Opiak replied: "You no like fish?"

I should have kept my big mouth shut. You cannot win out over Eskimo logic.

Ever ride a dog sled? Well, siree, let me tell you! Over smooth ice, it is quite a pleasant experience. True, this is merely an assumption, as we never got to traverse that type of terrain. Should anyone be prone to motion sickness, stay away from camels and dog sleds. Opiak's questionable course took us over fields of crushed ice where some protrusions were thirty feet high in places. One can imagine, if the dogs had a tough time of it, how I fared. Gracefulness has never been one of my attributes. In fact, one might say I have had, on occasion, two left legs. The sled was burdened down with six hundred pounds of dead weight — that is, when my dainty one hundred and eighty-five pounds was not draped over the supplies. When the sled hit ice crevices and areas of soft snow, Opiak and I would try to lift this Saint Nicholas invention and free it from impending disaster. A few of these "heaves" and "haws" and I was ready for an oxygen tent. Every so often I asked my Eskimo confidant how much further the new camp site was. His

consistent answer: "Little while, maybe three miles, maybe five mile. Pretty soon now."

After traveling ten miles I knew he was lost or lying, or his mastery of the English language was the fraud of the century. As I later found out, Opiak and his sisters, brothers, and cousins had a stringent rule for all visiting firemen. When strangers converse with them in English, converse back. Don't worry about understanding what they say. Simply parrot their questions, change a few words around, add a few of your favorites, look as though you do understand the language, and smile.

I verified my earlier suspicions in our new camp later this same evening when I lured Opiak into a conversation concerning the existing weather.

"Opiak," I asked, "do you think we are safe with this west wind blowing?"

Opiak frowned, weighed my question a moment, and answered: "I think so."

Several minutes later, I casually asked:

"Opiak, do you think we are safe with this east wind blowing?"

Opiak frowned, weighed the question, and answered: "I think so."

I knew then that all my previous witty conversations with Opiak had made about as much sense to him as a polar bear's talk would to me. Henceforth, every time either one of us spoke, it was either out of courtesy or to prevent our larynx from freezing. But we always smiled.

Tonight I merely went through the motions of existing. I was breathing and I knew that I could see, but all other senses were motivated by reflex. My last impression from

my sleeping bag was of Opiak waving a frozen fish under my nose, inquiring whether I would join him in a midnight snack. He must have read the message between my drooped eyelids, for I was not addressed again until morning.

April 20

Few restful hours transpired last night. A playful wind saw to that. The storm had come up quickly and departed with a tone of urgency. I hope it did not meet other Ice Pack travelers, although I cannot imagine anyone else who would be idiotic enough to spend his spring vacation within a two thousand-mile radius of here. This particular Arctic block-buster literally caught us napping. Opiak's native intuition woke him out of a sound sleep. He glanced outside the tent, then awakened me immediately. I groped outside to see what had caused Opiak's voice to change three octaves higher. All I saw was an early-breaking dawn. The wind was light and the temperature was a delightful fifteen degrees below zero. I asked my Eskimo friend why he was driving tent stakes in the ice. His detailed explanation consisted of a grunt and handing me a shovel.

"Build snow wall. I put up second tent."

What a helluva time for calisthenics!

While I shoveled out a snow wall, Opiak placed our heavy canvas emergency tent over the existing one we were living in. I have never known an Eskimo to move fast, so the very fact that Opiak was steam-rolling around camp, securing everything he could lay his hands on, alerted my semi-conscious mind and body.

I had a real snappy snow wall about completed when a blast of wind crept up behind me and almost delivered

a K.O. punch. No snow this time, merely large chunks of ice floating through the air with the help of a forty-mile-an-hour gale. Newcomers in the Arctic are not very smart in situations such as this. My I.Q. at the moment could have matched a dumb orangoutang's.

One recollection I have was of holding on to one of the iron claws normally used to anchor down the dog sled in such emergencies. I thought, "When this gives, there goes Holmes." Opiak realized I was not hiding under the coffee pot playing cops and robbers, so he crawled out of the tent on all fours in search of the great white hunter. I still had a death grip on the anchor when he led me back to the tent through the blinding hail.

The tent proceeded to give shakes, twists, and turns that would have put Gypsy Rose Lee to shame in her heyday. Then the storm moved off as quickly as it had arrived. We checked the damage and were pleasantly surprised. Most important, the dogs and sled were in one piece. Most of the outer tent had been uprooted and its canvas had suffered a series of tears. We did not have time to secure everything before the storm broke, so smaller personal possessions, clothing and food packed in light cartons, had gone AWOL.

Opiak suffered the sole accident when he slipped on the ice and fell on the shovel, causing a nasty gash on his head. I had suffered nothing worse than having two hours of chattering teeth, not entirely attributable to the freezing temperature. I even felt slightly cheated when I could not match Opiak's wounds of glory. So to make us both feel better, I complained about an earache. My Eskimo friend sympathized until I forgot which ear I had said was frost-bitten. Next time I will know better and complain of a head-

ache. Come to think of it, this won't work either, because I would have to have two heads ever to be in this predicament again.

The sun came out, tried to burn off the snow fog settled around camp, realized it was hopeless, and more than likely, visited Hawaii where working conditions were not so tough. After a hearty breakfast of tea and caribou jerky (the crackers were no doubt cruising at ten thousand feet over Point Barrow), we hitched up the dogs to the sled and began our seal hunt. We were not hunting seals for laughs, our purpose being to feed nine hungry mouths, the seven Huskies and two disgusted hunters.

Seals generally have more intelligence than to try to take sun baths on the ice with no sun. It took me five hours of mushing to accept this conclusion. Opiak knew it all the while, but felt there was an outside chance of spotting a seal who was as dumb as some white hunters he knew. Conclusion: no seals.

We felt very discouraged trailing back to camp in the late afternoon. The dogs looked at us, tails wagging, and expected us to produce a Blue Plate Special. I did not have the heart to throw them their herrings; the seals had vanished with the storm. Perhaps tomorrow the sun would be out, celebrating Easter. Some people prefer sashaying down New York's Fifth Avenue in the colorful Easter parade, others think of Easter as a time to share a succulent baked ham or turkey in a cozy family dining room, and there are those who believe it is a good day to enjoy an Easter brunch and dancing at their favorite hotel or restaurant. See why I have compassion? I have the opportunity to hunt seals in below-zero weather in order to keep from starving to death.

I announce right now, I have become a convert to the

science of wishful thinking. No sooner had I thought about Art and Bud and how they were going to spend their holiday tomorrow than I heard a steady droning in the sky, and there was the Arctic Tern scrambling through the fog bank in search of us.

Bud and Art landed fifty feet from our tent and acted somewhat surprised over my hysterical welcome. Opiak gave our guests the red carpet treatment by warming up the tea pot. I blocked the tent exit in case our visitors decided this outdoor living was not conducive to pleasant Saturday afternoons.

Helmericks had had the foresight to bring fresh provisions for man and dog alike. After the Huskies were fed, the four of us sat down to do some serious talking, but not before Arthur's beaming face informed me that my presence was not the sole reason for his happy frame of mind.

"I shot a record bear yesterday," announced Art proudly.

"And on his first day out with me," added Bud. "Art got himself a real giant."

"A record bear, huh," I replied weakly, trying my best to manage a sportsmanlike smile. It never got past my teeth.

Art looked concerned. "Is there anything wrong, Bill. You don't look so good."

"Oh, no. Nothing is wrong. I'm real happy for you. A record bear. Well what do you know. Probably larger than mine?"

"We didn't say that," answered Bud. "You both have record bears. Yours might be slightly larger. Now will you find your smile again, sport of sports?"

I gave Bud my superior glare and tried to act as if nothing had ever been said. Arthur tactfully changed the subject.

Since the boys' arrival, my chilled brain had been working overtime, contriving mad plots to ride stowaway on the plane trip back. I felt trapped. The new provisions cancelled the possibility of pleading hunger. Temporary insanity would not have worked either, for no one in his right mind would be camping on the Ice Pack in the first place. Then an ingenious plan entered the vacuum, sparked by the memory of an old cocker spaniel friend of mine and the trick he used when he preferred arm transportation to paw transportation. I made a vague excuse to check the weather and in my best Barrymore manner, I limped outside. My sudden physical liability could not be ignored. To be certain, I added a foot drag, accompanied by a courageous smile.

Three heads bobbed up in amazement, then concern, although Opiak's face never quite made the transition. I remember thinking at the time.

"Now he has to show me Eskimos have brains."

"What is wrong with your foot?" asked my guests, as they damn well should have.

"Oh, nothing, really nothing at all," I replied in a quivering voice.

"Sure there is," insisted a worried Bud.

"We saw you limp," agreed Art.

I shrugged and hobbled back to my bed roll.

"You mean my frozen foot?" I asked innocently. "The one I can't walk on? Oh, it probably will thaw out, given time."

The boys were indignant over my heroism, all except Opiak, whose suspicions could not have been more aroused if I had tried to sell him an icebox. But no, sir, Bud and Art weren't leaving me out here to suffer.

"And besides," explained Bud, "as long as this wind keeps up, there's no chance for seal hunting."

True, and his statement did much to ease my overtaxed conscience. Arthur further informed me that the purpose of their trip was to fly me back to base camp as an Easter surprise and they had planned to keep the secret 'till take-off time. To this day, I do not know how much truth supported Art's announcement. As for my part in the melodrama — well, that's how it goes, another black mark on the scoreboard when the trumpets blow.

Opiak was equally happy with the high command decision. Perhaps this was why he didn't play crusader during my survival trial. No sooner had the momentous news been announced than Opiak was striking the tents and loading the sled. He was driving his dog sled team towards the Arctic Prairie before Bud warmed up the plane for take-off. In the excitement of loading the Arctic Tern, I forgot the proper leg to limp on. I escaped detection because my tramping though the snow resembles at best an elephant escaping a quicksand marsh.

Tonight I must have the same wild-eyed look that Arthur had when he returned from the Ice Pack. The Woods clan glanced at me briefly, kicked around frantic Eskimo chatter, and heaped a good part of their winter provisions in front of me. I daintily attacked a caribou leg and proceeded to gorge myself. After my fifth helping, Nanny looked nervously at her diminishing food supplies. George, a practical businessman, kept filling my teacup, knowing all balloons have a bursting point. My audience looked rather ill at my impromptu bid for King of Arctic Gluttons. They helped me out of my chair, now I had ceased gnashing at the food, and off I waddled to my cot.

I ventured polite conversation with my hunting companions, but after gasping out five minutes of chitchat, I needed all my energies to keep my eyelids open. Nanny came over to the cot and offered me a piece of pie she had saved. I groaned, mumbled something I hope she did not understand and collapsed into a very welcome sleep.

April 21

The Easter bunny did not wake me up. Nanny's tripping over my sleeping bag did. The poor soul did a flying swan dive, and this was my first and last personalized contact with the Eskimo Nation. The purpose of her expedition to my cot had all the goodwill of Easter. Nanny thought that she would surprise me by waking me up to a cup of hot tea. I was more surprised when same tea, with cup and saucer, rechristened me. Terrific shot, though; only one-half of my head peeked out of the sleeping bag.

Nanny had another surprise, this one not so wet. The Easter bunny had managed to bring some fresh eggs into camp. He forgot the ham, but Rome was not built in a day. I wolfed down this delicacy. When, seeing Nanny's hurt expression, I assured her nothing could replace her caribou neck pot pie.

Most of the male segment in camp spent a delightfully lazy morning swapping lies about their hunting experiences, while the feminine contingent had the good sense not to listen. They were busy with some mysteries involving the wood stove and Easter dinner. Then Joe stomped into the cabin, interrupting a wild story spun about an Indian tiger attacking an African safari. Joe explained he had been out collecting firewood in the dog sled and had come across a fox caught in an old forgotten trap in the nearby river bed.

I say "nearby," as this was the way Joe presented the location.

Since trapping fox was illegal this time of year, Bud thought he would amble down and release the animal. I imagined a brisk stroll would do wonders for my appetite, so I volunteered to accompany Bud. Art was content with his mattress-prone position, or maybe he was intuitive.

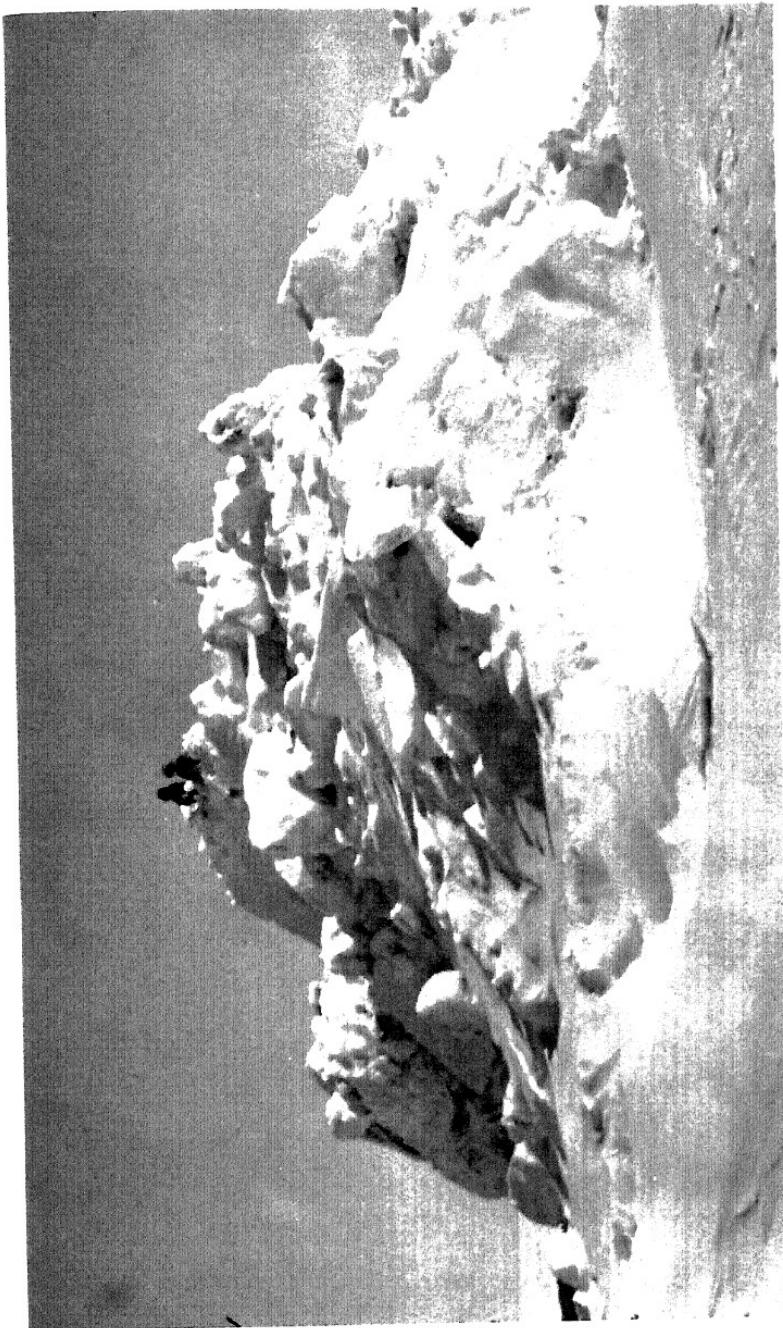
I had hardly walked one hundred feet when I assumed my Cub Scout stare and attempted to spot the fox. One hundred yards — no fox. One thousand yards — no fox. Why hadn't that idiot Joe released the dumb fox in the first place? One mile and I could not see a fox if the animal was in my arms. The wind had mercifully halfway closed my eyes from a snow glare that was blinding, even with my dark glasses on. What little strength I had left was foolishly being expended in voicing choice phrases aimed at Bud's back, some two hundred feet ahead. Bud stopped, and for the tiniest moment I had the horrible notion that the stupid wind had carried my unique barroom phraseology to him. No, Bud was smiling and pointing at a fox pacing to and fro on a snow drift while anxiously observing us.

I wheezed my way over to Daniel Boone and asked him if this was his idea of a belated April Fool's joke. The fox in front of us was less trapped than I was.

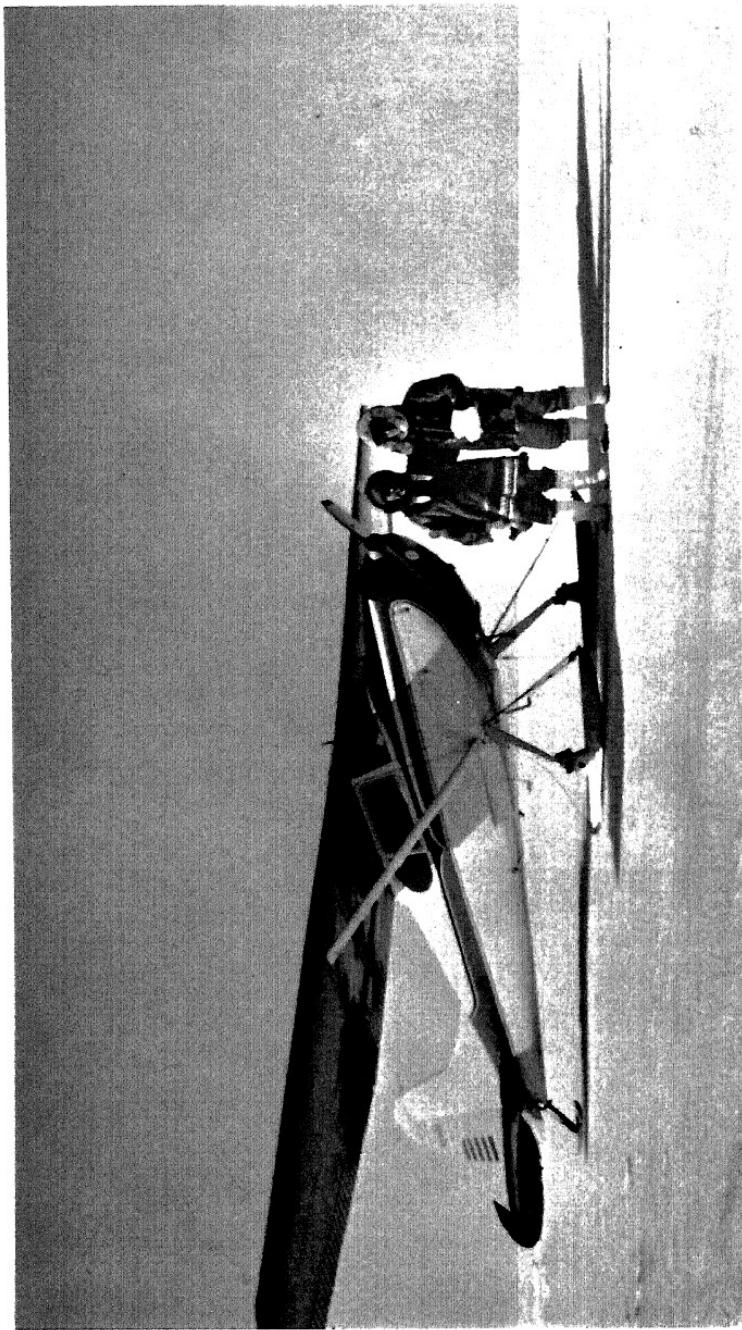
"That is the male," Bud informed me. "The female is the one in the trap beyond the drift."

I questioned nothing. How he knew a red ball of fur fifty yards away was a boy fox and how he knew the girl friend was in a trap neither one of us could see yet was too tiring a subject to bring up.

"Now watch the male try to divert our attention and lead us away from his mate."



The two dark specks on top of this typical Ice Pack formation are Crowley and Holmes.



The Arctic Tern, Arthur Crowley and author. This gallant plane did not fail her passengers once during the most unfavorable flying conditions imaginable. No one thought of The Arctic Tern as a plane. She was human.

No sooner had Bud prophesized this than the fox came running straight at us, barely crossing our path. The brave little creature looked back hopefully to see if his ruse had worked. If I had been alone, who knows, I might still be playing Follow the Leader. We proceeded to the trap. Swami Helmericks was right. We found the petrified female. Fortunately, all the steel jaws had imprisoned was the tip of one tiny paw. Foxes have courage as well as a model domestic relationship. She snarled her defiance, frightened as she was. We could even see the heart beats. This fox did not need a road map, once Bud released her. Our final glimpse of wild life was two red balls of fur reunited and breaking a track record. I was still smiling until I remembered the jaunt home.

During the tramp back, we came upon another Arctic Prairie resident. We disturbed a lone wolverine from a morning siesta. The wolverine, resembling a giant-sized weasel or badger, is a favorite topic of Bud Helmericks. Bud contends there have been more grossly exaggerated stories about the viciousness of this animal than there are about any other Arctic game.

"It just ain't so," contends Bud.

I have read stories where hungry fiction writers give first hand accounts of how the wolverine attacks and kills animals many times his size. One writer even reported how the wolverine has attacked Eskimo children.

I took another look at the disappearing animal and was not entirely convinced the above-mentioned authors were wrong. I asked Bud if he would suggest the wolverine as a household pet. He snapped back:

"No, but I would not suggest a horse in the bedroom either."

I had tired feet and a ravenous appetite when Bud helped me through the cabin door. Art had finished a *True Detective* slick. George was talking to himself and why not? He was his own best listener. Nothing earth-shattering had taken place in the cooking department. Nanny and Lydia were sewing hides for moccasins. As a returning hero, I was a flop. Nanny informed us dinner would be somewhat delayed as Joe had earlier sighted a flock of ptarmigan, a tasty bird related to the partridge family. Would we like some? Damn right we would. I could eat the caribou hide off Bud's parka.

"Fine," replied Nanny. "Shoot some."

Apparantly I was too shocked to nod "yes" or "no." Art had to be a big mouth and agree with Nanny. Joe understood enough English to race out the door and hitch up the dog sled. Helmericks faked a backache.

Easter afternoon was spent mushing way the hell and gone over the ice-covered prairie. First we investigated the river bed; next we scouted the snow banks; then came an inch-by-inch survey of every snow drift in a five-mile area. Joe looked stupified. He had seen the ptarmigan flock in this area only three days ago.

"When?" I screamed. I frightened him. He drove the sled faster towards home camp.

As I jogged behind the sled, I was partially consoled to find that my appetite had not disappeared with my patience. Perhaps I should explain the foot race with the dogs is not by choice, rather necessity. One man *sometimes* may ride the sled, provided the snow has a hard enough surface. In this case, two men used foot power and one man rode, each of us taking turns driving the dog team.

Never did a more bedraggled Easter crew drag themselves into camp. I visualized a turkey and ham spread, assorted steaming vegetables, mincemeat pie — the works. My reveries came to a screeching halt. The table was not set and Nanny had a hungry expectant look about her.

“Where’s the ptarmigan?” she asked.

“Out on the — damn prairie,” I shouted.

Art diplomatically changed the mood and subject by inquiring what was for Easter dinner.

“We thought ptarmigan,” chorused the group. George Woods shook his head regretfully and interrogated Joe in their native tongue. There was much shouting, with hand waving and hysterics. Finally satisfied, George moaned:

“No understand. Joe good boy. Always catch ptarmigan before.”

The beans were hot, the jam was sticky, the bread frozen, the conversation limited. Bud lightened up the whole affair, or so he thought by converting a napkin into a rabbit. Everyone applauded — Art to unfreeze his hands. As for me, in my daze I would have followed a crowd out of a tenth-story window.

The droning of a plane outside saved us all from Bud’s life-of-the-party repertoire. The Reverend Bill Wartes had dropped in as an Easter surprise. He brought with him good news for some of our camp’s members. Yet news that was, selfishly, sad news for the rest of us. Bill Wartes had come to take Della Mae, Marshall, and Joe back to Point Barrow. Apparently the children’s mother had so improved these past weeks that the doctor felt the best medicine would be to have Della Mae and Marshall with her. The Woods family were rightfully upset at having to lose “their” little girl and boy.

Della Mae and Marshall had been with them two years now. George and Nanny probably had known within their hearts that some day this would happen; yet Eskimos are no different from us. We all choose not to face unpleasant facts.

Joe had to return to Point Barrow for his annual tuberculosis check up. Medical authorities had wisely made this a rule with all Arctic residents, knowing this was the only way to control this death-dealing disease. Losing Joe temporarily did not bother George and Nanny so much. Joe would be back for Nanny's cooking, and there was always Lydia.

There was no use putting the children under the emotional strain of tearful goodbyes, so all Bud told them was that they were going for a nice airplane ride. All hands helped pack their gear into Bill Wartes' ski plane—all except Nanny, who was tearfully sulking in a corner, trying desperately to devise a last-minute plan to keep her "family" together. The poor woman refused to accept the fact that Della Mae, Marshall, and Joe were leaving, and she was still in the corner when Bill Wartes' plane flew over the house as a final farewell gesture.

George turned on the generator light plant, usually reserved for birthdays, weddings, and Saturday nights, in hopes of cheering up the camp. This meant Lydia could turn on the phonograph and play her selection of ten hillbilly records. We listened to them rapturously, but on the fourth go-round, a headache took over. I retired to my sleeping bag while the celebration continued. I had made the first move; Arthur was trapped for another hour. Lydia was parrotting the lyrics directly at his baby blue eyes, now that Joe was no longer an obstacle. In went the earplugs, and as a further precaution I took a sleeping pill I had been hoarding for

such an emergency. One hundred and eleven sheep, one hundred and — my last thought was a gold star for the wonders of medicine.

April 22

We have many things to accomplish today before starting our wolf hunt. A visit to Point Barrow is first on our agenda. In three days' time, Arthur and I are headed for Umiat, Wien Air Line's emergency landing field. There a DC3 will pick us up and fly us to Fairbanks, Alaska.

Knowing the fickleness of Arctic weather, Bud thought it wise to fly into Point Barrow while weather was favorable. Arthur and I still had the rest of our gear stored in the Reverend Bill Wartes' church attic. You remember — the scene of my first solo jump. Since we needed all available storage space in our plane, Arthur elected to remain in camp while Bud and I took the hop. If my compadre assumed he had laid the ground-work for a quiet morning in his sleeping bag, George and Nanny Woods soon upset his plans. They announced to Arthur how happy they were to have an extra hand mending fish nets. Their idea of a fish net was not mine, and damn sure was not Arthur's, from the expression on his face as George and Nanny raveled hundreds upon hundreds of feet of net and stretched it on the smooth ice surface in front of the cabin. Nanny handed Arthur some net cord and a whalebone needle. Her instructions were brief and to the point. Watch her first and then get to work. I left Art with the following wish: "Have fun, girls, and watch those fingers."

Arthur had a message for me, but it will not appear in this manuscript.

Our flight to Point Barrow was uneventful. For sheer

boredom's sake, we followed fox tracks and eventually came upon two beautiful white Arctic foxes. They trotted along, completely unconcerned with our aerial antics. They sensed we had no intention of harming them.

Good old Point Barrow. Nothing had changed except the snow streets had accumulated more dirt and the population had increased by eleven on account of ten August brides. Don't frown; one Eskimo lass had twins.

The Reverend Bill Wartes was holding a service, so Bud and I ventured over to the local canteen for a bite of lunch. I had a bowl of soup and a ham sandwich. The bill came to four dollars and twenty cents — rather steep in any man's income bracket. I considered a faint or a rage — anything to appeal to our innkeeper's sense of justice. The Eskimo proprietor listened calmly to my hand-waving oratory and then added fifty cents to the check for the crackers he had served with the soup. Bud rushed me out for fear of another speech and an additional charge for the paper napkin.

Bill Wartes graciously helped us load our plane with Art's and my gear. He tactfully forbade me to go up to the attic; so I waited outside, feeling like a complete idiot. Since we were making the trip, Bud and I dropped over to the general store to fill Nanny's grocery order, plus seize an opportunity to catch up with the local gossip. We arrived in time to hear an Eskimo holding an audience breathless over his recent hunting exploits. Nanook was the heavy in his blood-curdling tale. It seems this chap had recently come off the Ice Pack a near casualty of gnashing polar bear teeth. He was relating how a polar bear had stalked him while he was hunting seal.

Apparently the polar bear had approached unobserved

to within twenty feet of the Eskimo before detection. There had been a scream, a whoop, and a rifle shot — in that order. The unharmed animal went due east, the unharmed Eskimo chose due west as his course. My suspicious mind went back to one question. Was this Eskimo blind or plain stupid to permit so near a contact? Here is the answer I got, and to my amazement, Helmericks backs it up: Mother Nature has given the polar bear a clever insight for stalking game. Since Nanook's fur blends fairly well in a snow background, the only visible color difference is his black nose. What, then, does the bear do to prevent detection? He sticks his tongue out and curls the whitish-pink tip up over his nose, thus making his camouflage complete. I stress to my readers that yours truly has not bought this explanation entirely, and I do not ask you to do so. Yet accomplished and sober Arctic hunters swear this is the truth. Personally, if I saw Nanook stick his tongue out, I would wait for a rude noise to accompany the gesture.

Now we are on my favorite topic, polar bears. I picked up one other pearl of wisdom at the general store. The natives regarded me with amazement when I admitted I did not know all polar bears were left handed. Again, do not ask me why. Eskimos and white Arctic settlers testify to this fact from first-hand observance of bears swiping their massive left paw at fish and seals. Should a potential Nanook hunter wish to call a truce with his polar bear, he should stick out his left hand. Don't confuse the beast!

Bud and I left Point Barrow in rather a hurry. A report of an impending storm was broadcast over the radio. Neither of us had a fondness for this metropolis. We found even Nanny's home cooking far more to our liking.

I did not find Arthur working on ~~the~~ fish nets, but definitely ready for the net — if you know what I mean. He had a strange stare about him and refused to talk to me for the longest time. Arthur's talents did not cover cord crocheting, and Nanny reported at one time she and George spent five minutes unraveling Arthur. He is an excellent lawyer, though.

Point Barrow's storm warning cancelled our potential wolf hunt. After an hour in camp, I was delighted Bud had had the sense to heed it over my objections. We gathered up the nets and stored them safely. An Arctic storm could cause them more damage than a whale with Saint Vitus dance.

It has stormed all evening. Our prime concern was Opiak, still out on the Arctic Prairie. Arthur and I felt chills in our sleeping bags, for we knew how Opiak felt right this moment. If he does not arrive tomorrow, wolf hunting will turn out to be Opiak hunting. I shivered again. Not a very pleasant thought to go to sleep with!

April 23

Action! Battle stations! This is how Art and I were awakened this morning by a very excited guide, one Bud Helmericks. I am not accustomed to being whisked away so abruptly from my private dream world. Naturally, there have been exceptions, a few of them unpleasant. War episodes and an experience dealing with a private detective agency. I certainly did not expect Helmericks shouting down my neck at six a.m.

Surprising how the sub-conscious can dress the conscious! I was ready for the Alaskan invasion within minutes. Bud was prancing around like a circus pony, chattering about

a pack of wolves in the area, Arthur had the look of a skeptical Irishman as he glanced at the wall calendar to be sure it was not April 1.

While Arthur struggled into his clothes. Bud calmed down enough to tell us the whole story. He had been awakened by the urgent barking of our dog sled Huskies. Their yelping and howling persisted; Bud hurried outside, fearing several of the dogs had slipped their chains and were at each other's throats. No such thing. The dogs were nervously pacing up and down. Off in the distance came a series of howls. Now Bud had the picture. A pack of Arctic wolves were circling the perimeter of camp. If the wolves reasoned our sled dogs were chained, they might sneak into camp and attack the Husky puppies, who roam about camp at will. Another possibility was that one of the Husky bitches had come into heat. Wolf packs have previously been known to gather for miles when such a situation prevailed. Anyway, there was no mistaking that our base camp had these unwelcome visitors.

The rest of camp was up by now. Everyone knew what to do in spite of the initial confusion. Nanny and Lydia poured the coffee. George mumbled an Eskimo good luck rite. Arthur gathered up the shotgun and shells and put the can of oil for the engine on the stove. The Arctic Tern must be ready for a quick take-off.

Bud, Arthur, and I raced down to the plane and freed her from the tie-downs. Wolf hunting from the air permits only one hunter and the pilot in the plane. I felt Art should represent the Crowley-Holmes Arctic efforts for two reasons. First, Arthur had had the raw end of the deal hunting on the Ice Pack, and secondly, Art was far more accomplished with

the shotgun because of the skeet training he had while a naval pilot in World War II.

Five minutes later, Bud and Art were airborne. I wish that I could give an account of what occurred during the next hour. But it would only be secondhand and with little accuracy and color. Sometimes we saw the plane, sometimes we did not. I say "we," referring to the home troops observing the battle through binoculars from the roof of the cabin.

Bud repeatedly dive-bombed his Cessna until the horizon swallowed him up. Then he would pull up and roar at another wolf target. It looked like an Arctic version of the Anzio beachhead. One time I thought I saw one of the wolves running across the prairie in our direction. I sighted my rifle, keen for a wolf kill. My scope picked up the target. It is a good thing I did not have a fifty-caliber machine gun, or Crowley and Helmericks would be mounted in my den today. My "wolf" was the Arctic Tern.

Bud's aerial strategy was evident. He would spot one of the wolves from the scattered pack and make a pass over the fleeing animal. Arthur would lean out the cockpit, calculate the wolf's lead, and spray his target with buckshot. Not every pass was successful. As Arthur later reported, wolves take a lot of killing.

To elucidate on his statement, a wolf will tumble up into a ball and play dead at the first signs of buckshot. True, some of the pellets may have found their mark in his rump or back, but not enough of a lead concentration to cause a mortal wound. The wolf looks dead; so the inexperienced pilot and hunter make a mental note of where the wolf's body is lying and pursue the others in the pack. When they return, no wolf. Lobo has long since headed towards the hills or taken camou-

flagged refuge by a river bank while licking minor wounds. No, the trick to wolf hunting is to gauge your lead so that your shotgun discharge will concentrate around the wolf's head. They do not walk away from brain shots.

Bud Helmericks told me that once he had landed his plane to pick up a wolf kill, a large male and female traveling alone. He examined the female first, a magnificent brute boasting a grey-blue pelt. Instead of luggering her to the plane, he thought he would first make sure the male was a clean kill. Bud does not like to see any animal suffer. The male wolf was a beautiful specimen too. He hitched a rope around his paws and dragged him back to the female — only the "dead" female was no longer there. To this day, Bud has not the vaguest idea how sister wolf did the Houdini trick. He is delighted about one thing, however; he did not try to lug his prize back to the plane in his arms.

The aerial dog fight continued for another hour. When I saw the Arctic Tern landing, I wondered whether Crowley had run out of wolves or ammunition. One look at Art's beaming face was answer enough. He had bagged seven out of seven wolves, somewhat of a record around here.

My boy Arthur is also a practical man and no doubt the fifty dollar federal bounty given for each wolf killed in the Arctic inspired his smile and marksmanship. I thought to myself later what I would do for three hundred and fifty clams, and came up with some startling answers.

Arthur found out that it takes more than squeezing the trigger to wind up with wolf trophies. I parted company with him as he settled down to a very unpleasant task of wolf skinning. Relieving an animal of its hide or pelt is normally a tiring job, but nothing else. Not so with wolves. The Arctic wolf

is at best a stinking animal, so you can imagine your nasal reaction while skinning his hide. Arthur was not smiling any more when he later came into the cabin and washed his hands ten times.

Bud offered to fly me out on the prairie in search of wolves after we had had some lunch. But the best laid plans of men go astray. Once again, Arctic weather expressed its defiance. A ground fog rolled into camp, thus cancelling our search for wolves. Actually, my disappointment was not overwhelming, as the chance of flushing a wolf pack from their den was unlikely. There had been too much shooting activity this morning, and any wolf spectators still around were aware of the fact that they would not be perfectly safe enjoying a prairie sunbath as long as the author had the shotgun.

However, the afternoon held a pleasant surprise. Opiak finally made it in from the Ice Pack. The yelping Huskies, eager for base camp and home cooking, announced our Eskimo friend's arrival. He had been slightly delayed by the sudden breaking up of ice along the Lead. Once the Ice Pack begins to crumble due to warmer atmospheric conditions and ocean currents, it is an excellent idea for the traveler to be sure the Arctic Prairie is underfoot and not the ocean.

Opiak reported seeing the first whales of the year swimming the outskirts of the crumbling ice. This would be exciting news to the Eskimo residents of Point Barrow. Whaling accounts for a major part of their annual income as well as being a prime source of food. The Eskimos build their own style of open, oar-driven skiffs. They spot the whales swimming through the narrow ocean-water channels winding their way through fields of floating ice. One whale follows another as the school journeys to warmer waters. The Eskimos in-

tercept these giant mammals of the sea and begin their onslaught, using the primitive hand harpoons as their weapon. Some whales escape; some Eskimos do not. It takes tremendous courage to attack such a formidable foe, knowing one twist of the whale's tail can smash a skiff to oblivion. If the impact does not kill the Eskimo, the freezing waters will finish the job. At best, a man can survive four minutes exposure in the ocean.

Point Barrow villagers accept these dangers with an amazing casualness. Granted, the rewards are great. One whale divided up among a crew will assure each whaler security for himself and his family for an entire year. The meat and oil bring excellent prices. I have observed Eskimos for a while now and I believe I understand their philosophy concerning this dangerous undertaking. An Eskimo would rather risk his life once a year than to have to work the other three hundred and sixty-four days to support his family. All Eskimos are like children, preferring to sit by camp fires and exchange stories while waiting out the long, dark winter months. When spring and summer arrive, they get the urge to travel the Ice Pack and match their wits with polar bear, caribou, and seal.

The rest of today and this evening proved uneventful. I was unhappy with the weather and decided the best thing I could do with my bad humor was to take it to bed with me. Therefore, I bid you goodnight.

April 24

Our final day to hunt. Perhaps that is why Arthur and I enjoyed only snatches of sleep last night. We were up at dawn. This may not seem particularly heroic to you, but

please remember, the sun now rises at three a.m. in the Arctic Circle, thus making owls and hunters the most frustrated members of the community.

Arthur and I rather imagined that the entire camp would be up and at 'em, considering the importance of the day. All the company we had were assorted snores emanating from our hosts. Art made possibly the worst coffee I had ever tasted, and yet this "witches' brew" came in very handy. I asked Ireland's version of Chef Milani to fill five cups of what he thought was coffee. I then tippytoed around to George, Nanny, Opiak and Lydia. I confess a certain reluctance when I included this Eskimo Bobby Soxer in my scheme, but someone had to cook breakfast and I damn well was not going to suggest Crowley for the occasion. Shortly thereafter, the identical thing ensued with each of the sleepers. I put on my good fellow smile, gently shook my sleeping friend and whispered in his sleep-drugged face:

"Good morning. Rise and shine."

Without exception, the sole reaction was a reproachful glare, followed by a few Eskimo phrases not yet defined in the encyclopedia.

"But we must wake up, mustn't we?" I chirped. "This is our last day and we want to start hunting and we are not that tired, are we?"

This was the psychological moment to wave the coffee cup under their noses. More out of desperation than habit, my victims grasped the cup and downed its contents. Shock, sheer terror, disbelief, to name a few emotions, all had their five minutes on stage. George Woods was gasping and groping for the water bucket. Opiak rushed out of bed to retrieve a piece of seal blubber to chew on. Nanny Woods simply lay

in bed, rolling and groaning. One might have suspected she was giving birth to a baby walrus. And Lydia, poor Lydia! She was trapped between modesty and desperation. How to stop the hot flashes and yet remain under the bedcovers? I chuckled gleefully and suggested to Arthur that we make a discreet exit. We met Helmericks on the way out. He had apparently heard the commotion from his cabin and was on his way over to rescue us from the attacking polar bears.

We had our breakfast and that was all you could say for it. Nanny knew how I especially disliked oatmeal and that Arthur's pet peeve was fat, greasy bacon. Guess what were the two breakfast entrees? Conversation was as limited as the courses and I somehow felt that Nanny would spend all day in search of caribou hooves for our farewell supper. Fortunately, the Woods family were devoted students of the Ten Commandments and shortly after breakfast we were once again one big happy family.

The wind had shifted twice so far today, and the sun had thoughtlessly sought refuge behind ominous storm clouds. Ordinarily this type of weather would discourage seal hunting. Yet it was now or never. After today the only seals Crowley and I would see would most likely be bouncing a rubber ball in a sawdust ring.

We did have one other mission of importance: to snap pictures of high ice pressures, something we had neglected to capture on film.

The Arctic Tern bravely challenged a rapidly increasing wind. We winged our way for the last time towards the great Arctic Ice Pack. The air was turbulent, and halfway to our destination I decided Nanny's warm kitchen was vastly preferable to spying on seals' mating habits. It was just about

that time of year; however, the way I figured it was if a seal caught me sneaking up on him and company, either I was a clumsy hunter or he was a lousy lover.

We searched by air all the smooth ice stretches, a favorite resting place of seals. No luck. The wind must die down a bit before we could spot any game. Bud flew over some magnificent ice formations and landed about one-quarter of a mile away from the aquamarine and deeper blue peaks.

The three of us resembled the photographic unit of a Max Sennett epic, the comical way we piled out of our plane with cameras, tripods, film cases, and reflectors. The entire purpose of taking pictures was to film dramatic shots showing Art and me undergoing Arctic hazards. Bud felt that filming us perched on top of a jagged peak eighty feet high would give such an impression. I had never climbed an ice peak eighty feet tall, so I acquiesced out of ignorance.

I should have thought it strange when Bud slapped me on the back, gripped my hand, wished me luck, and solemnly whispered: "Never look down."

Naturally, I thought he was clowning, that is, until I climbed sixty feet or so and glanced past my feet to see if Arthur was following. About this time following me was the least of Arthur's problems. The wind had whipped his parka hood over his eyes and he was having a grand old time playing blindman's bluff with himself. His feet were fighting each other for the same square inch of resting place, and his hands were quite busy gripping a thin ice ledge.

Veteran alpine-club members might have chuckled over his predicament. I was not so inclined. I took one more frightened look and saw the handwriting on the wall. If this could happen to my athletic friend, Crowley, then it sure

as hell was going to happen to me. I interpreted Art's manly grunts as an SOS. Call me a coward, but I turned off my tuning set; however, not before I included Arthur in my prayers. Had I attempted to reach Arthur, my climbing partner would have had one hundred and ninety pounds of dead weight to contend with. I kept seeing four of him, and a strange whirling sensation, usually reserved for mornings after, took over in the visionary department. Before I completely disgraced myself, Art regained his footing and composure. We proceeded up the ice wall.

Now I have read books on the art of mountain climbing and have seen the same thrilling travelogues you have. I pictured them all as we clambered up that damn peak like two raped mountain goats. Where were the ice picks, the ropes, the spiked shoes? Here we were dressed for the sinking of the Titanic and with boots designed for tobogganing. Pardon the anti-climax, but we reached the top without further mishap.

Ever climb up a water tower and then regret it? Now you know my precise sentiments after I heaved myself to our goal. Momentarily, my imagination whisked me to the role of famous explorer. Bud shattered the illusion by waving violent hand directions, I imagined concerning camera angles. Crowley remarked:

“What does that idiot want, a smile in this — damn predicament?”

“Don't get excited, Arthur,” I warned. “You are shaking the ice, Arthur. Careful now, fellah, no fits up here!”

Arthur snarled his defiance, nearly causing my predicted landslide to become a reality. More frantic wavings from Bud. He was shouting something, but the wind drowned

out his words. Arthur was next to me draped over the peak's ledge. Each time a gust of wind came along, we grabbed hands and held on. Thirty minutes had elapsed since we started this balancing act, and Arthur and I agreed that if Helmericks had not taken his pictures by now, we would figure out some trick photography back at Hollywood and Vine.

What goes up, must come down. We confirmed the rule. Art had the worst of it. He kept groping for old footprints. I had it easy: whenever I needed leverage, I used his head. I must say that Arthur is sure a snarler, all the way down too. Fifteen feet from the bottom Arthur slipped and made like an express train the rest of the way down. I assumed he knew what he was doing; so I followed the leader. I guess Arthur did not get out of the way in time. Yes, sir, that Arthur sure is a snarler.

We checked for broken bones and tempers and instinctively allied ourselves when beaming Bud Helmericks trotted over.

"Hey, didn't you fellows hear me?"

Now there was an intelligent question. There we were eighty feet straight up, flat on our backs while a small typhoon whistled "Dixie."

"How the devil could we hear you, you grinning ape? You think we can read lips?" I spat back.

Art backed up my pronouncement with his sincere sneer.

"I figured you couldn't or you would have come down sooner. One of you boys had the film in your parka," laughed our guide.

It goes without saying who lugged the film eighty feet up the peak. Still, it did not seem bulky in my pocket. Poor Arthur! He had no more snarl left.

The wind let us know it was here to stay. The gusts picked up the surface powder snow and flung it into our faces. Bud wanted to enjoy another season or two of guiding, so he suggested that we return to camp immediately.

There were no last fond looks at the Ice Pack as the Arctic Tern struggled inland. The Ice Pack acted angry we were leaving — angry because we had traveled over it, lived on it and survived. Its anger was aided by sympathetic cohorts, wind, hail, lightning, and thunder, elements that no doubt also felt cheated because we had left the great Arctic Ice Pack alive and unconquered. Our little plane seemed to race for her life as she skimmed over the ice fields, trying to keep a step ahead of furious skies. I think I was more nervous during this particular flight than at any other time flying the Arctic Circle area. All three of us breathed a sigh of relief when Bud set the plane down on the camp's landing field. We wasted no time draining the oil and tying down the ship. The storm was right on our heels and would seek revenge.

Nanny's cheerful cabin made us forget the past few hectic hours. George had turned on the power plant. No kerosene lamps tonight for our farewell party. Opiak and George had yielded to Nanny's orders that everyone wash his face and hands, comb his hair, and put on sweet-smelling stuff. I did not recognize my two Eskimo cohorts.

The Woods family outdid themselves tonight. Dinner was a scrumptious affair. Where Nanny got her menu and how she prepared it on that wood stove was the biggest mystery of the Arctic so far, although I suspect Bud sneaked off to Point Barrow early one morning to fill Nanny's shopping requirements: roast duck, sweet potatoes, carrots, mashed potatoes, green beans, oven-baked bread, apple pie, cherry pie, chocolate cake, and grapeade.

We talked way into the night. I think we all felt time was running out and we did not want to waste these last precious moments of companionship. We could always sleep. After George's third pipe had burned down, the old man fell asleep in his chair. The evening's excitement had caught up with Nanny too. She was dozing in her favorite rocker. Opiak was devouring the pictures of a *True Detective* magazine. Lydia had gone to bed long ago after she realized no young lady her size could eat a whole duck and half a pie and not feel the after-effects.

Arthur and I reluctantly admitted we could use some sleep; so in minutes, lights went out and camp was still. I heard Arthur turning and tossing on his cot.

"Arthur," I whispered, "Are you going to miss all of this?"

"You know it," was his answer. Then as an after thought he whispered back: "Aren't you?"

"Are there cows in Texas, Art?"

So ended our conversation.

April 25

No one likes goodbyes, and yet this was the day Arthur and I had to face this unpleasant task. Arctic farewells are particularly sad. The wilderness is a lonely place at best. People are used to lonesomeness; when new friends are made, it is particularly difficult to give them up.

Oh, I know, everyone will shake hands today, promising each other to write and assuring one another that there will be future visits. We say it because we *want* to mean it. If we voiced the likely truth, that today could be the last time Arthur and I will ever see these wonderful people, then say-

ing goodbye would indeed be a cruel experience. These are the thoughts I awakened with this morning.

Camp was subdued, even though everyone was outwardly smiling and cheerful, perhaps just a bit too cheerful. Nanny thoughtfully excluded the oatmeal mush from breakfast but threw everything else on the shelf in the menu. Nanny insisted Art and I have everyone else's second helping. Better to stuff ourselves than to be a target for Nanny's wrath.

Bud looked out the window and abruptly excused himself to go outside. He returned in time to save Arthur and me from making an equally abrupt exit, but for a different reason.

"Don't feed the boys like it is the Last Supper," chided Bud. "From the looks of that ice fog rolling inland, we might not make Umiat airstrip."

Nanny beamed at the prospect of having us around for a few more meals.

As much as we hated to leave, Art and I had a tight travel schedule to meet. We were headed towards Alaska's Kodiak Island to hunt the great Alaskan Kodiak bear. If we missed that plane at Umiat, all of our connections and hunting plans would be seriously delayed. No, we had to make Umiat.

After Nanny's scrumptious spread, I waddled down to the cot and collapsed for twenty minutes. It takes time to digest pickled moose tongue, caribou chops, and fishtail soup.

Bud snapped us out of our siesta. He informed Art and me that we had better start packing at once. A second ice fog was rolling in from the Ice Pack, and unless there was a change of wind, our camp would be blanketed within an hour.

The cabin heaved with activity, everyone having a specific job. Lydia and Nanny yanked our clothing off the wash lines, while Art and I busied ourselves by cramming our gear into duffel bags. Opiak had joined Bud at the airstrip and was chopping out the tie-down stakes. Bud was nursing hot oil down the Arctic Tern to insure a speedy take-off, and George Woods — he was just being George, mostly shouting instructions at his wife and daughter. I must say, though, he did offer to pull the cord of my duffel bag.

The caravan proceeded to the plane. The Arctic Tern was loaded, and there we were, standing around dreading the inevitable moment of final farewell.

Bud became more panicked than anyone else in this emotional showdown. He hid behind a gruff attitude and growled:

“Why is everyone standing around like they are at a funeral? Say goodbye. We have some flying to do.”

Nanny and Lydia greeted this order with an Eskimo wail. George Woods solemnly shook hands with Arthur and me. No words were exchanged. None had to be. Opiak followed suit. Lydia smiled at us through tears and waved goodbye. However, this heroic silent treatment was not our beloved Nanny’s cup of tea. She glared at the others, spat out a few choice Eskimo words, and threw herself into Arthur’s arms. May I say that my hunting companion has never been State Department material during hysterical feminine crises! Arthur appealed to me with his eyes; Nanny had blocked off the rest of him. He was attempting to unleash the death grip Nanny’s arms had around him and kept repeating:

“Say goodbye to Bill, now, Nanny. Look at Bill over there. He wants to say goodbye.”

The men folk unraveled Nanny in the same manner as one would an octopus. Nanny craftily pretended to swoon. The damn fools let her go and she flung herself into *my* arms. The rescue squad mustered forces and formed a flying wedge to release me. I stumbled to the plane. Arthur was already safe inside and hiding behind the duffel bags. I had never before been emotionally violated by a grandmother; so the sound of Bud revving up the engine was music to my ears.

Perhaps Bud thought Nanny would try to hang on to the wing struts for a second go-round. He did not go through his usual pilot's check. One blast of the engine, and the Arctic Tern did an acrobatic leap into the sky.

Bud had been correct when he prophesized "sticky" flying conditions. The emergency landing base of Umiat was a good hour away and already we were flying through a soupy haze. The trick was to beat the rolling ice fog into Umiat. I saw Bud resort to something he had never done before in all the thousands of miles I had flown with him. He punished the Arctic Tern by throttling the engine to maximum power. Our little plane did her best to respond, although now she had headwinds to contend with.

Thirty minutes elapsed and we should have known that the handwriting was on the wall. Perhaps we did but would not admit it to ourselves. We were flying blind. To make matters worse, Bud's altimeter needle was wavering — a great time for this to happen. It was evident that the further we flew inland, the great risk we took in crashing. We had lost visual contact minutes before, and should the Cessna's engine fail, we would join the long obituary list of Arctic pilots and passengers who thought they could lick the weather.

Bud flew an about-face and headed back towards camp.

Arthur and I could not hide our disappointment. Bud took one look at "the Gloom Twins" and proceeded to lecture us.

"Sure, you are disappointed. So am I. But a change of plans is better than a permanent change of address."

He was right and we knew it. Yet most men are little boys when things do not go just the way they have been planned. Bud brought us out of our sulking mood with a happy thought.

"Did it ever occur to you idiots that if we could not land at Umiat safely, how could Wien Air Lines?"

Gloom was no longer a passenger. If we got any half way decent break with the weather later today, Art and I might yet be able to make our original flight connections. Bud kept thumping the instrument panel in hopes the altimeter would revert to normal operation. Our guide is not an alarmist, but his face was etched in worry lines. The reason was obvious. Apparently this inland fog had rapidly extended itself towards our base camp. We had to cross a series of "hilly mountains" before dropping down onto the prairie flats where camp was located. Bud had no choice but to lift the Arctic Tern's nose and gain altitude. By maintaining a close check on our watches, we found that we had lost the race back to camp with the fog.

Bud made an approximate location calculation and flew a quarter-mile square pattern. Flying under these conditions in a modern airliner while maintaining contact with a field tower is one thing. Flying by the seat of your pants is quite another. I am not ashamed of the fact that my face and body resembled a steam room attendant's during our aerial game of "Button, Button, Who's Got the Button?" Arthur, too, did not exactly resemble the first breath of spring.

The reader can remember the many times I have referred to Lady Luck in my story. She smiled on us now. With no apparent warning, the fog began to thin out. Fifteen minutes of flying and we could faintly see the ground. Bud made a quick inspection and gave a sigh of relief. While we were not directly over camp, he recognized a familiar landmark and reset his course. Ten minutes later we had landed on the airstrip.

Art and I felt slightly ridiculous making the grand entrance, considering our recent departure proceedings. Nanny came rushing out to meet us, shouting: "You miss Nanny. You change mind?"

I did not have the heart or the opportunity to tell her the truth. Besides, Nanny had reverted to her chimpanzee embrace and tearful demonstrations. Bud put a headlock on her and dragged her aside to bring her up to date on the latest Crowley-Holmes travel plans.

Now the entire camp sulked, once their information officer had spread the news that we had not returned to spend the summer with them. No more dinner spreads for us. Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches was the half-hearted compromise. Art, Bud, and I spent the better portion of the day starting out the door and giving Arctic weather our individual curses. Any other part of the world and we would have lost all hope and retired to our sleeping bags. However, past experience proved it possible to have a blizzard one minute and sunshine the next. We did not unpack the plane for this express reason and further to facilitate an immediate take-off, Bud turned over the Cessna's engine every twenty minutes. Our hopes did not go unrewarded. The fog lifted as quickly as it had arrived.

Farewells were brief, although equally emotional. Bud

lifted the Arctic Tern towards a clearing sky for the second attempt to reach Umiat.

It was an entirely different trip this time. The prairie sped by, revealing great herds of moose and caribou. We had not yet seen such heavy concentrations of prairie wildlife. It was as though they had gathered to bid us farewell.

No doubt the following incident will not be believed by many readers, as it seems the perfect way to add a last dash of excitement before my story's conclusion. However, Bud's insurance company can well testify to the validity of the incident.

The landing conditions at Umiat were excellent. Bud circled once and set the Arctic Tern down on the emergency runway. Then all hell broke loose. For the first time our little sweetheart failed us. The Arctic Tern's landing skis lost control on the ice-slick runway and our plane began to swerve crazily in a sideways direction. Those of you who have experienced the unpleasant sensation of your car skidding on ice can understand how we felt. Bud used every trick in the book to keep the plane under control. When he realized additional power was useless to change the ship's direction, he cut the engine and kept battling the controls. Bud did not have to tell Arthur and me to prepare for the impact.

The Arctic Tern resembled a bowling ball attempting a difficult alley shot. The plane knocked over two field emergency lights and was tackling the third when Bud maneuvered his ship off the runway and into a shallow ditch. Bud, Arthur, and I were saved from impending injury because of safety belts. The Arctic Tern took the brunt of punishment, her tail section, right wing and landing gear all suffering from the landing light's hard steel.

I remember thinking as we careened crazily down that runway, "thirty thousand miles of flying over uncharted ice and now this has to happen at an airport!" Arthur shouting, "This is it!" did not improve my state of mind.

Umiat's airport crew raced across the field in jeeps and a truck and on foot when they saw our predicament. They wasted no time helping us out of our plane and speeding us back to the warmth of their living area.

Five cups of coffee later our metabolism returned to normal. Umiat ground crews were already repairing the Arctic Tern. Bud would have to stay at the field for a few days until his plane was reconditioned. One of the bush pilots headquartered at Umiat offered to fly Bud back to base camp to tell the others, so they would not worry. That is how men feel and act in the Arctic.

Wien Air Lines' DC3 was overhead requesting permission to land. The end of our Arctic hunting trip was minutes away. Helpful hands loaded our gear in the DC3, and now time had come for final goodbyes.

The three hunting compadres, Bud, Art, and I, must have looked pretty silly to an outside observer as we stood around, shuffling our feet and starting to say something and uttering nothing. I could think of no words which would not sound trite, and to try to express my thoughts was an impossibility. However, my feelings were evident from the suspicious drops of water running from my eyes. Arthur was a blur, but I noticed he had suddenly developed a bad head cold, the way he was using his handkerchief. I will not bore the reader with any more descriptive sentimentality regarding our Arctic Aloha; besides, there are some things reserved not even for books.

Arthur and I pressed our faces against the DC3's windows, and far below us on Umiat airstrip stood the solitary figure of Bud Helmericks. He was waving a message all three of us felt. Some day we would return to the Arctic, to polar bear camp and for a reunion with friends such as are rarely found in one's lifetime. Our friends in Point Barrow, the Woods family, and in particular, Bud Helmericks had found a very special place in our hearts.

ence of being lost on the vast, frozen northern wastes; learning to hunt Arctic style — jumping from a small plane and firing immediately to make the first shot count; the grim realization that the vital shot at a huge advancing Polar bear has misfired — the thrill of bagging record setting Polar and Kodiak bear trophies; all these and much more are told by Holmes in an unusual, readable, often hilarious style.

For the hunter, fisherman, or tourist thinking of a trip to the 49th state, "A Square in the Arctic Circle" is required reading. For anyone who loves a good story of exploits, thrills, and chills, it will be an unusually rewarding experience.



United States Senator Ernest Gruening from Alaska says:

"I have read 'A Square in the Arctic Circle,' by William D. Holmes, and enjoyed it very much. It is excellent."



United States Senator E. L. Bartlett from Alaska states:

"We Alaskans believe that the 49th state offers innumerable attractions for the visitor. Mr. Holmes has done well to record these attractions based upon his long experience as a world traveler and seeker of adventure. I hope 'A Square in the Arctic Circle' will be read widely and that we Alaskans will have the opportunity of greeting Mr. Holmes' readers in our state."

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